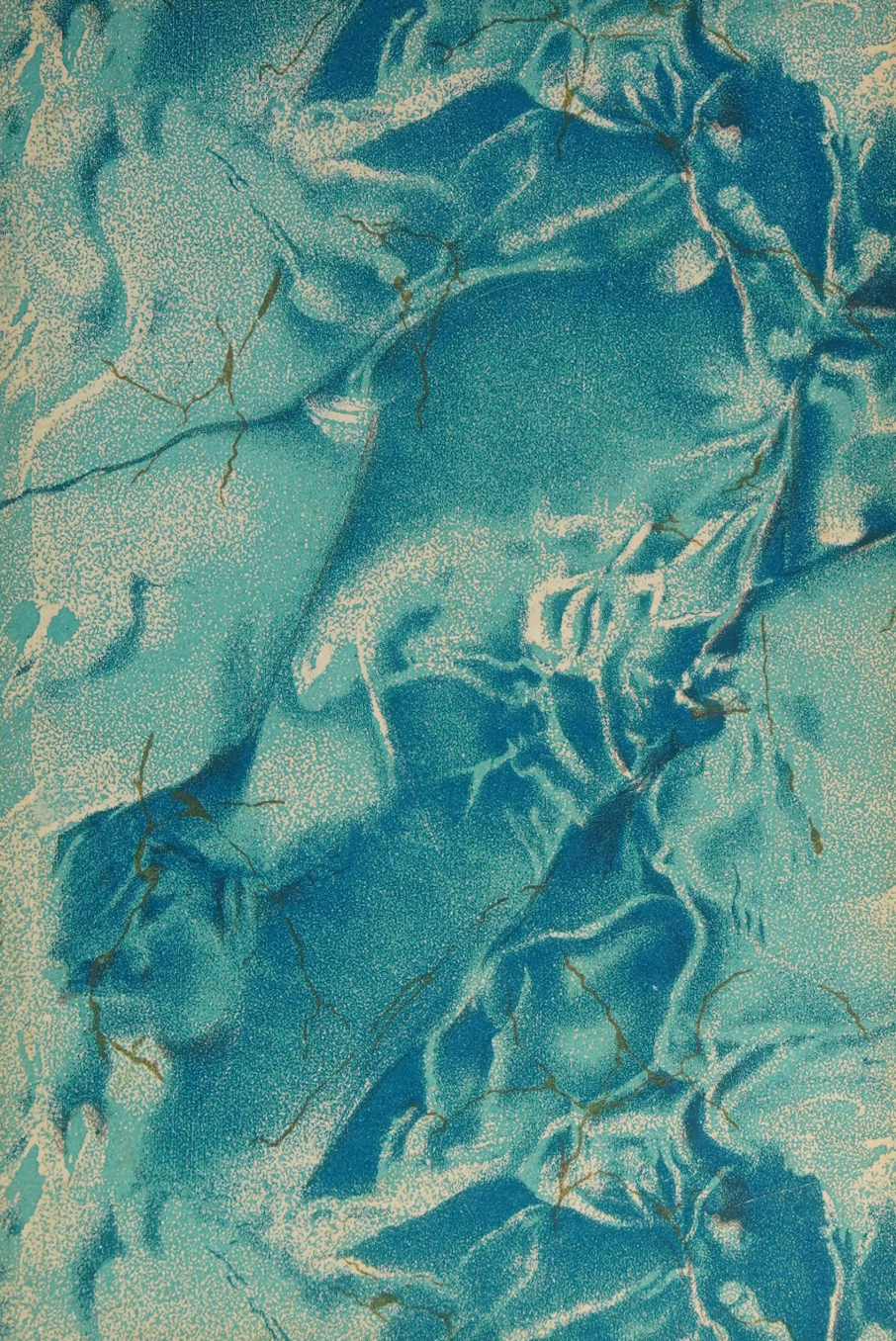
A SECOND BOOK OF VERSE

Ernest Neal

Boys' Fishes



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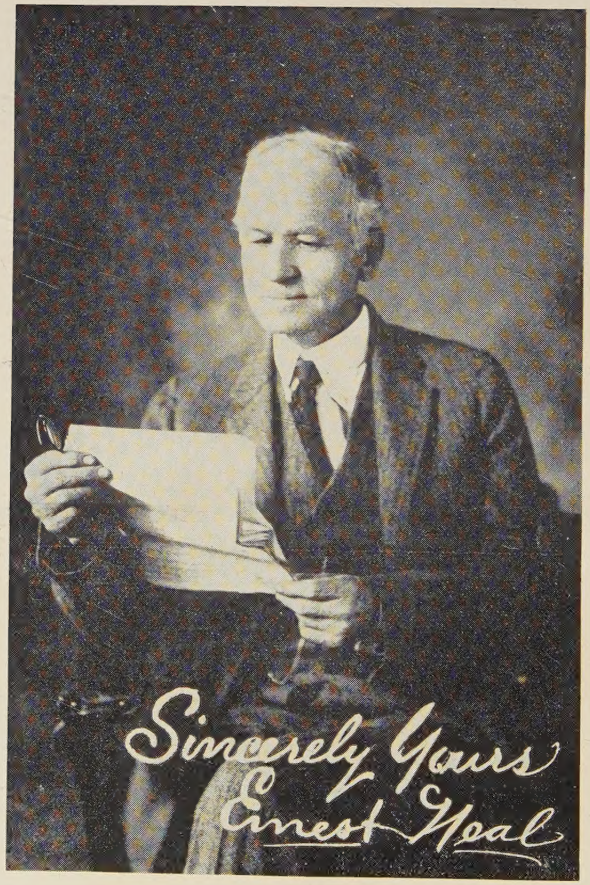
Sincerely Yours
Ernest Neal

Lays Fisher

A SECOND BOOK OF VERSE

By

ERNEST NEAL

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Macon

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1928
BY
ERNEST NEAL

Foreword

THE publication of "A Second Book of Verse" by Ernest Neal, Georgia's widely known and popular poet laureate, is of outstanding interest to all lovers of southern literature, and especially to the people of Georgia, Mr. Neal's native state.

Poets, like flowers which sweeten the landscape, grow out of the soil; and northwest Georgia, the region in which Mr. Neal has spent most of his life, has cradled a number of gifted writers. It is a region of smiling valleys, purple mountains, and musical streams. It is natural that the charm of the landscape should have woven itself into the dreams and moods of one so responsive as Ernest Neal, and, as might be expected, we find the breath of the hills and the song of the streams illusively intruding themselves into his poems.

Ernest Neal was born at Sparta, Georgia, September 6, 1858. His father, George V. Neal, was an able and prominent lawyer and, before the Civil War, was an extensive planter. From childhood, the poet lived in an atmosphere of culture and refinement. His mother, Lavonia Holmes Blackburn Neal, was a woman of rare intelligence and a lover of literature and art. He is a descendant of Captain David Neal, a soldier of the Revolution, and one of the earlier settlers of Warren County. On both sides of the house his lineage can be traced to colonial ancestry.

As a child Ernest Neal attended school in Warrenton, receiving at the Warrenton Academy such preparation for college as was required at that time. He entered the North Georgia Agri-

cultural College, at Dahlonega, where he boarded in the home of David W. Lewis, president of the school. Colonel Lewis had been a member of the Confederate Congress, and afterward, president of the Georgia State Agricultural Society. For years an outstanding figure in Georgia, he never rendered better service to the state than while president of this school, for he was by taste and education pre-eminently fitted for the position. Association with him and his cultured Christian household made a deep impression upon the mind of the young student.

When Ernest Neal left the Dahlonega institution in 1881 he was elected principal of the Warrenton Academy and entered upon his long career of teaching, which he has made his life work. It was during his first year as a teacher at Warrenton that he married Miss Mamie Gallaher, a daughter of Nicholas Gallaher, who had moved from Ireland and was then a merchant at Warrenton.

More than thirty years ago Mr. Neal moved to northwest Georgia, making his home at Calhoun, where he was for many years at the head of the city schools. It is as a teacher that he is best known and loved; for to him boys and girls are more than song.

His poetic career began when he was a mere boy. While a student at Dahlonega he wrote "Nacoochee," which is one of his most widely known poems. It was published at the time in an Atlanta newspaper. Mr. Neal has, all his life, been a contributor of verse to local newspapers. It is as a contributor to the Atlanta Constitution, however, that Mr. Neal has become most widely known. He has never tried to gain entry into the magazines. A few years ago he issued his first book of verse. Only one thousand copies were printed, and the type distributed. The book met with most favorable reviews, and the edition was soon exhausted.

Nurtured in a home filled with the works of the English poets and later becoming the companion of the mountains and the hills, Ernest Neal could not escape being a poet. Poetry was in the

air he breathed and in the woodland pathways along which his footsteps led.

In the present volume and the preceding one Mr. Neal's poems are characterized by deep sincerity and marked by especial beauty and sweetness.

To that class of readers who enjoy well-considered and ably executed verse, and who feel a patriotic and loyal impulse to preserve in their libraries the best of Georgia literature I commend this book by Georgia's gifted poet laureate.

I know of no more fitting close for this brief sketch than to quote the words of an eminent Georgia editor and critic who said:

"There is no sweeter, gentler man in Georgia, than Ernest Neal —very modest, very retiring. He has contributed much to the current literature of the day, and has attracted well-deserved attention throughout the South."

Decatur, Ga., October 8, 1928. James A. Hall.

DEDICATION

TO

MR. AND MRS. A. B. DAVID

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS WHOSE APPRECIATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT HAS BEEN AN INSPIRATION TO ME

THIS VOLUME IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

Author's Preface

THOUGH seldom knowing the *why* of my own obscure but insistent motivities, I submit a reason for this, my second book of verse.

Having been named, by legislative enactment, *Poet Laureate of Georgia,* a title glorified by the genius of Frank L. Stanton, I feel that my state will not tolerate a mute song-bird.

I have gratefully sung, in a minor key, these new songs, which, combined with those already published, I hope may catch the ears and reach the hearts of approving readers.

Yours sincerely,

ERNEST NEAL.

Calhoun, Ga., November 15, 1928.

Grateful

(An appreciation of the honor conferred on the author by legislative enactment naming him as poet laureate of Georgia to succeed the late Frank L. Stanton.)

LIKE A flower that blooms in depth of the ocean
'Neath billows that never can break on the beach,
My soul is awake 'neath a spell of emotion
Too silent and still to float into speech.

My gratitude's deep, but can not be written;
A song's in my heart, but it can not be sung;
My harp is too weak, my memory smitten
By the echoing chimes that Stanton has rung.

His muse bids me rest on his bosom and listen,
While Georgia bids mine to rise on the wing.
Is it strange that I linger where love's tears glisten,
'Til I feel, in his place, I am worthy to sing?

To

My Wife

UP TO this hour my boast hath been that naught
Can stir the soul beyond the power of tongue
Or pen's expression; that thought can find a way to words.
But as I dwell upon thy name and all thy life
Hath been, and must be unto me; a school
Girl's tender smiles, a maiden's blushing love,
A bride's first kiss of trust, a woman's full-blown faith,
A mother's gentle care—my first-born smiling on
Her knee; the years of joy and grief, with fortune's
Golden light upon the hearth, or hard-times
Knocking at the door—and thou the constant
Fount of ever pure and holy love, the source
Of all my strength—

My muse is dumb to nothings of poetic lore,
And Fancy's glowing dreams turn pale before
Two potent words that thrill and fill my life—
A theme within itself the sweetest song—my wife.

To

James A. Holloman

WE, birds of passage, chanced to meet,
One knew the other but by name;
Yet I have found your praise so sweet
I'm glad our paths together came.
Now, whene'er I'm on the wing—
Thru sunny or thru cloudy weather—
I know that I shall sweeter sing
Because we spent that hour together.

Had it not been for Caesar's praise,
Virgil's harp we might not hear;
Nor Horace piping classic lays
But for Macenas' listening ear.
Who knows but my poetic trills,
Encouraged by your honored name,
May swell into magnetic thrills
And echo thru the halls of fame.

Invocation

A MUSE that deigned to loose the Pythia's tongue,
Nor scorned the aged hag in Delphic shrine,
Where erst by rustic maid were measures sung,
Vouchsafe this humbler, untaught harp of mine
The strains from chords attuned by touch divine.
What tho' the times thy holy hill deride,
And modern bards disdain the Heavenly Nine,
Thou canst, O Muse of Song, a suppliant guide
Thru paths that lead to heights where Truth and Dream abide.

A SECOND BOOK OF VERSE

A SECOND BOOK OF VERSE

AN APOSTROPHE TO THE SPENCERIAN STANZA

O thou, most wond'rous verse by Spencer wrought,
Steed formed and fashioned for the *Faery Queen!*
Thy measured pace hath borne majestic thought
'Mong Alpine peaks and many a glorious scene
Where archaic shadows fall the lights between.
Thou favored mount of Byron's vagrant Childe!
My visions grasp thy name, o'er thy neck to lean;
For haply, it shames thee not to be beguiled
From thine accustomed heights to paths obscure and mild.

With Byron where the lurid lightnings leap
From Jura's brow, and threat'ning thunders roll;
Or Burns where weary peasants peaceful sleep,
The steed's the same. The wild ambitious soul
Of English lord, with proud ancestoral scroll,
And Scotland's sweetest bard that steed delights.
Along the path of each I love to stroll;
Ascend to thought's most lofty, snowy heights,
Or thrill at song of lowly cotter's happy nights.

YONAH
(At Sunset)

Beneath the mountain's ever glit'ring crest,
Along old Yonah's slope the journey lies,
Above Nacoochee's vale, hid in a nest
Of tree-clad pinacles that 'round it rise
Above the plain, like geni to the skies.
Here let us pause awhile to bathe the soul
In rapture o'er the scene that meets the eyes;
For Nature never did more gorgeous scroll
Than these entrancing charms of land and sky unroll.

Not "Cintra's mount, nor Cashmere's gentle vale;"
Not Geneva's lake, nor Danube's soft blue tide;
Not "Circassian citron grove, where the gale
Fans dusky beauty's cheek at eventide;"
Not "Zambezi's rocks, where the waters glide
In torrents that from cliff to jungle leap"—
Not these and all this wonderous world beside—
Out-charm this unsung, wild, majestic steep
About whose rugged base ten thousand beauties sleep.

Oh, scene transcendent! Magic mystic maze!
Kaleidoscope of ever varying hue!
The summer sunset paints with golden blaze,
While o'er the eastern slope, in hazy blue,
The rising moon pours forth her soft light, too.

The kiss of hastening night and lingering day
Commingle in the mellow melting view
'Til the shimmering gold and silver gray
To somber twilight shadows melt and fade away.

And now 'tis night! and in shimmering sheen
Of moon, full orbed, and glorious evening star,
The Chattahoochee winds his way between
Yon banks, whose willows trace but do not mar
That silver scroll adown the valley far.
Enchantment lingers here! And mystic ties
Unite me to the glorious moon-lit scene—
The smiling vale, the peaks that 'round it rise—
While star-beam nerves connect my spirit with the skies.

MY SOUL

'Tis night, and broodings deep upon me steal;
On thee, my soul, my solemn musings dwell.
Thee all things hide, yet all things thee reveal;
All that to archangel ever yet befell,
Or demon dared to dream in depths of hell,
Or man on sin-cursed earth hath wrought.
Thou spark of God! Thy scintillations tell
Of star-lit realms where I may read his thought,
Nor cease to live until His universe is naught.

Whence art thou immortal essence? Whence
These half-wake recollections of a day
Beyond the morn when thou wert ushered hence
Within this fragile tenement of clay?
Art thou of Universal Soul a struggling ray
Caught in environment of Time and Space?
Eternal and immortal only in the way
That matter ceases not? Tho waves erase,
The ever-crumbling rocks in other forms find place.

This world, about whose crest a soft light glows
From all the stars that grace the mid-night sky,
Doth tell—in stone-writ words—of nature's throes;
Of solar fires and changing forms that die
'Mid earthquake shock and seething waters high.

Thus woven in the soul—deep woven—run
Inherent lines of light brought from on high;
Instinctive threads of truth—like star-light spun—
Caught from the loving heart of God, the central sun.

Upon this rugged mount we call *today,*
Or some *tomorrow's* last alluring steep;
Somewhere—somewhen—the summons comes to lay
This mortal down in earth again to sleep;
But when the stars have ceased their watch to keep,
The never-dying soul shall still explore—
In realm of truth or dream—the ocean deep
Of its own mysteries; tho on this hither shore
Dark clouds arise to thwart, and threat'ning thunders roar.

GEORGIA-LAND

TO CHARLES W. HUBNER

I've seen thy face but once; and then
Thy youth was gone, thy prime of manhood past;
But still into the hearts of men
Thy courtly grace a pleasing radiance cast.
Thy frame, like stately ship approaching shore,
Rich-laden, proud, serene, and old,
Seemed conscious of the spirit-wealth it bore,
More precious than Alaska's gold.

I've seen thy face but once; and yet,
No stranger thou; for many years ago
I felt thy touch, ne'er to forget,
In songs that thrilled and filled me so
No circumstance can e'er contrive
Thine image in my soul to mar—
Can time, or space, of light deprive
The lake that's mirror to a star?

Of Harris, Ryan, Hayne, Lanier,
In classic sonnets hast thou sung—
Within each note a sigh, a tear,
For harps upon the willow hung.
Thy soul, akin to theirs, why should I wait
To find its last and loftiest dream?
My wreath accept this side the pearly gate—
An humble bard's love and esteem.

GEORGIA

Georgia, I love thine every foot of ground—
Not as a stranger loves, but as a son
That feels within his arteries run
The blood whose ancient fount in thee is found;
Whose tide did 'gainst the Spaniard surging bound,
And, warming to the savage tribes oppressed,
Evoked sweet love from Tomochichi's breast.

Georgia, my race thy history has made;
Of English blood I ever shall be proud—
The blood that knows not death nor shroud.
The heart that planted Bonaventure's shade
Died not with the hand nor perished with the spade:
It thrills the living Anglo-Saxon race
In every breath and time and place.

'Twas English blood against a foreign king—
Resenting selfish tyranny and wrong—
That fired thy soul and made thee long
For liberty—thy name a hated thing;
But nothing in a name could ever swing
Georgia to a George whose selfish ends
Would crush alike his enemies and friends.

Of the South thou art the Empire State
And set 'twixt mountains and the sea.
While runs thy course with Right's decree,
"Wisdom, Justice, Moderation"—motto great—
"Non sibi sed alliis," blest is thy fate;
The blade of war rejoices in its sheath,
And peace and plenty smile thy skies beneath.

American I am; would wars were done—
It's greater still to be a Georgian, too;
And as I gaze into her skies of blue,
I pray yon peaceful, glorious-shining sun
May see in ports of earth no threat'ning gun;
Then, cannons hushed and battle flags all furled,
The Dove of Peace shall nest throughout the world.

TO THE WITCH'S HEAD AT TALLULAH FALLS

E'er Egypt's man-made Sphynx or pyramid arose,
Or Babel's tower essayed reached the courts on high;
Or ever Eden's joys were withered into woes,
And sin-cursed man had wandered forth to die
Out in a frowning world, beneath a leaden sky,
Convulsion-born and nurtured in a storm
'Mid earthquake shock and mould'ring solar fire,
In God's eternal plan came forth thy rugged form;
Man-like lineaments that inspire
Our groveling souls to something higher.

O, Sovereign Rock! Men name thee Witch's head,
But witch nor wizzard ever message bore
Like that upon thy kingly features spred:
In thee we read a mystery-hidden lore
Of love and truth—and long for more.
We pigmies of a struggling, fallen race,
With souls bedwarfed by doubts and fears,
Behold God's thought of us in thy strong face.
Through Time's long labyrinth of years
Comes rock-ribbed strength to dry our weakling tears.

Survivor of the floods and messenger of Time!
Thy undecaying grandeur breathes in solitude
An eloquence of awe, stupenduous and sublime,
Till, lost in dreams of God, we mortals are imbued
With strength akin to thine. Doubt and fear subdued,
We rise to meet the storms of life, resist temptation's shock.
With head erect and visage all serene,
We stand unmoved—and life's a shining rock,
God-writ by man and angel seen
Where love and truth have ever been.

MY PINEY-WOODSY GIRL

Way down in Southern Georgia
  Where blows the ocean breeze,
And moss, in festoons hanging,
  Adorns the cypress trees,
Across the Dixie Highway
  Bright sandy roadlets pass,
With many a little by-way
  White ribboned through the grass;
Where vines of yellow jasmine
  And honeysuckle curl,
I found among the blossoms
  My piney-woodsy girl.

CHORUS

My piney-woodsy girl,
She sets my heart awhirl.
  I'll ne'er forget the day I met
My piney-woodsy girl.
I loved her eye, her golden curl;
I named her my South-Georgia pearl
  I'll ne'er forget the day I met
My piney-woodsy girl.

She's fairer than the fairest
Of all the flowers that grow,
And to me she is the dearest
Of God's things here below.
Her hair is like the sun-light,
Her brow like marble stone;
And from her eyes a love-light
Soft shines for me alone;
Her lips are like two rubies,
Her teeth are purest pearl,
With pinks her cheeks are blushing,
My piney-woodsy girl.

You may talk about your fairies
With light and airy wing;
Of moon-lit isles enchanted
Where siren voices sing,
But life in dear old Georgia
Down by the rolling sea
In sugar cane and pinder field
Is sweet enough for me.
There joys of earth and heaven
Like angel wings unfurl
About a nymph in flesh and blood,
My piney-woodsy girl.

AUGUST IN GEORGIA

Softly, sweet with dreamy hours,
  Comes the summer's wanton queen;
August, robed and wreathed in flowers,
  Lounges on her couch of green.
June and July, tender smiling,
  Joyous shone on fields of toil;
And, with gentle love beguiling,
  Wooed the gifts of gen'rous soil.

Now their languid sister, glowing
  In the charm of land and sky,
Heir to rest and things a-growing—
  Fruits mature and crops laid by—
Bids us rest, and, resting, treasure
  Blessings in her soothing light;
Dreaming day-dreams, finding pleasure
  In her voices of the night.

Drowsy August, foot-sore mortals
  With thee rest in gentle peace;
In thy flower-trellised portals
  Hearts from sorrow find surcease.
Take of me and all the nation
  Thanks and praises to thee due;
Queen of Summer and vacation,
  'Neath thy smile's a dream come true.

LINES ON THE DEATH OF SENATOR A. O. BACON

Now, noble Georgian, thy journey is ended;
Hushed is thy voice, and stilled is thy hand.
The tears of thy state and the nation are blended,
And grief, like a pall, hangs over the land.

In the bosom of God thy spirit is sleeping,
Bright be thy visions in heavenly dream;
While over a grave a country is weeping,
The deeds of thy life in radiance beam.

In the light of the truth and of duty going,
Courage was thine in the hard-fought fight;
Steadfast thy ship when the tempest was blowing;
Serene was the sail, guided by right.

Like a sun that is set, a bright glow leaving,
Thy life yet illumines Georgia's fair sky;
Gladdening her spirit while over thee grieving,
Thy service lives on; it never can die!

THE HEART OF A ROCK

When war-smitten Georgia in dire desolation
Lay trembling and bleeding 'neath the enemy's rod;
And brothers were foes in a then-severed nation,
Now united again by the goodness of God;
When the sweet Sunny South in ashes was lying,
And pale Pity wept at Folly's rude shock
Stone Mountain looked down on the dead and the dying,
And tragedy smote e'en the heart of a rock.

Now History's Muse, a-weeping in sorrow,
That hate and perversion e'er blotted her leaves,
A memorial seeks that would give tomorrow
The truth that the hand of destiny weaves;
Beside her the sculptor's genius is breaking,
While demons of danger and disaster mock;
At the touch of his hand naked truth is awaking
And leaps in the light from the heart of a rock.

Whatever has been, a nation of brothers—
Looking back on the past, its right and its wrong—
With the mantle of love the war spirit smothers,
But honors war's heroes in sculpture and song.
No North and no South, save in proud recollection,
Through ages to come one people shall flock
To the mountain to read, in the light of reflection,
The lesson that comes from the heart of a rock.

War's heroes are martyrs, enwreathe them with glory;
But war is a hell that never should be.
Not with big armies, but heart-throbbing story,
Honor peace-loving Grant and home-loving Lee.
No envy or hate, no ignoble emotion
The pathway of peace ever shall block;
To salute not the flag with love and devotion
Would shatter to atoms the heart of a rock.

COHUTTA
(A Perfect Night)

Where late the storm-king, blust'ring, snowing,
His raging wrath against the mountains hurled,
The north-wind, hushed, has ceased his blowing,
And stillness deep enfolds a white-clad world.
The midnight moon in queenly grace and splendor
Looks down on calm Cohutta's hoary peak;
The silent stars, her children bright and tender,
'Mong drifting clouds play hide and seek.

The day was cold and dark with sadness;
Tonight peace lights with joy the land and sky;
O'er Cohutta's brow bright clouds, in gladness,
Like ships of Heaven, go floating by.
Just out my window casement lies enchanted
A beauteous landscape robed in white;
For sweeter draught no thirsting soul e'er panted
Than this I drink from a perfect night.

Footfalls of angels in the silence tinkle,
Like frozen music seem the distant spheres,
Light fairy hands upon the snow-sheet sprinkle
Shining star-dust of the vanished years.
Undreamlike dreams, too high for man's attaining,
O'er my visions flit, half-hid, obscure.
Cohutta calls! This turbid, waking life is waning,
And night's deep charms my soul allure.

Oh, God! 'Tis sweet to live in thought and feeling!
To dream vague truths in things of Thine we see;
Fond nature smiles, Thyself but half concealing,
And loving her, we love and worship Thee.
Tonight my glad heart looks and lingers
Where dreams have homes on mountain height;
Cohutta's snowy peaks are Earth's white fingers
That point to Thee this perfect night.

CALHOUN

Nestling 'mong mountains,
Sparkling with fountains,
    Beautiful city Calhoun!
My heart ever beats
For thy pleasing retreats
    Where sun-light is gentle at noon;
For trees never made
A lovelier shade
    Than falls on thy bosom in June.

Thy beautiful river
Flows onward forever—
    In rhythms flows on to the sea;
And the farther he flows
The sadder he grows,
    For he passes no city like thee.
And he mingles his groan
With the ocean's wild moan
    While his spirit flows backward with me.

My soul, like that river,
Time cannot dissever;
    Tho the stream of my life trends away,
It touches thee still;
Thy shock and thy thrill
    Are with me forever and aye.
Recollections are flowers
In memory's bowers,
    And they bloom in December and May.

OCTOBER IN GEORGIA

How gorgeously clad is October!
Oh, month of all months of the year!
How queenly, yet pensive and sober,
She saddens her smile with a tear!

In psychic communion she binds us;
Her spirit commingles with ours,
And lost in her charms, we find us
Enwrapped in her soul with the flowers.

Out from the sordid and leaden,
Transmuted, we ride with the breeze—
Away from the flesh-pots that deaden,
To feast with the hills and the trees.

Our souls on the mountains we pillow;
Our couch reaches down to the sea,
And we find in the spray of the billow
A glorious drapery.

Enmeshed in a world of beauty,
We are one with the golden-rod.
Oh, to dream and to love is a duty!
And October's a dream of God!

GEORGIA SCENES

Oh, for the gift of Bobby Burns!
I'd write a song in praise
Of Georgia scenes and Georgia homes
In simple southern phrase.
'Twould touch and charm the souls of men
Like his own Scottish lays.

For sure 'mong Scotia's rugged hills
No purer life can be
Than blooms on Georgia's varied slope
From her mountains to the sea.
Nor marsh nor cove less charming are
Than bight and glen and lea.

Where Oostanaula's flowing tide
Makes music to the ear,
And fertile valleys spreading wide
Among the hills appear,
You'll find the Georgia cotter's home
And all its inmates dear.

Here Saturday night's much the same
As on the Ayr or Clyde;
The Holy Book whose "heavenly flame"
Lit Scotia's ingleside
This hearthstone 'lumes, and Jesus' name
And love and peace abide.

The bairns, or chaps, it matters not
Whatever name we give—
Perhaps 'mong these, one little tot
May in the White House live,
And for each scolding that he got
Ten thousand cheers receive.

God bless the barefoot country boy—
The home-spanked, prayed-for kind—
That catches bird notes in his heart
And sunbeams in his mind;
His pants uncreased, he'll make a man
By Nature's law refined.

In field with flaky cotton white,
Or green with graceful waving corn,
In honest toil he finds delight
And knows no task to shirk or scorn,
But welcomes rest that comes with night
To limbs by faithful labor worn.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Sweet, gentle sleep! How soft, how soon
Thy mantle falls upon the farm!
When katydids hum their drowsy tune
In dewy woodland's shelt'ring arm,
And the mellow light of full-orbed moon
Floods the scene with dreamy charm.

This is the hour when from his tree
The mock-bird's varied song is heard;
With sorrow melts or charms with glee
Beyond the reach of poet's word.
What notes! What trills! What ecstacy
Floats from the soul of that kingly bird!

The scene must change—the rosy beams
Of morning now light up the sky;
Sweet Rose awakes from pleasing dreams,
And blue-birds chirp from trees near by,
"We're glad you're up! To us it seems
The day comes not 'til you ope your eye!"

Dear playmate of the birds and flowers!
My Georgia girl with face so fair,
These friends among thy garden bowers
With music fill and fragrance rare
Thy tender heart, and heavenly showers
Nurture truth embedded there.

Sweet Rose knows not the far-off town
  Where fashion queens and show girls reign;
Where Wealth and Want, with iron frown,
  Alike mete out less joy than pain,
To dupes of pleasure clad in velvet gown,
  To hungry, half starved slaves of gain.

Yet say not that her life's obscure,
  It opens to the vaulted sky.
God's out-of-doors her world secure,
  In Virtue's fields her pathways lie
Thru pastures green, by waters pure,
  And up the mountains reaching high.

HOME OF MY CHILDHOOD TIME

Oh, bursting buds and odors sweet!
Oh, woods and fields and skies!
Oh, everything, joy-laden Spring,
Charmed by your love-lit eyes!
You bring me dreams of long ago,
A sun-lit flowery clime;
A magical maze of gladsome days
In the home of my childhood time.

Like a stream from the dwindling snow
My sun-warmed spirit creeps
Through melting cares to vanished years
Where dreaming Memory sleeps
Lapped in the sweets of spring
And soothed by the tinkling chime
Of music that floats in sweet bird notes
In the home of my childhood time.

Away with the wisdom of years!
I'm young and happy again;
The south wind's mood steals into my blood,
My soul into songs of the wren;
And, with all the sweet voices of spring,
Is afloat in a sun-lit clime
'Mong flowers to rest and build her nest
In the home of my childhood time.

THE POET'S SOUL

(Written during an early morning visit to the home of the late Robt. Loveman)

O, robin, bluebird, thrush and wren!
O, sweet fresh morning air!
O, soft sunshine that warms like wine!
Was ever day so rare?
You wreathe me with a magic spell;
In light and song you bring
The soul of one who loved you well
And from you learned to sing.

'Twas in this grove where music thrills
The jeweler of song
Caught in his breast the tender trills
That to bird-notes belong.
Sing on, sweet birds! In cameos
Of verse your notes he set,
And from the cloud the south wind blows
He carved a violet.

O, hazy hills and towering trees!
O, bright blue-vaulted sky!
O, moon and stars and all that breathes
Of love's infinity!
Your heights and depths his genius sought
To find the unique gems
Of which with master-hand he wrought
Poetic diadems.

He slipped away to slumber land,
And tears from baby's eyes
He strung into a pearly strand
Of loving lullabies.
"Thus all my days were days of song,"
He sang, "till life's eclipse."
Then entered that immortal throng
With song upon his lips.

O, friend of children, birds, and bees,
And "brother to the sun!"
Thou sailest now on broader seas
Than mortal looks upon.
"The gulf below, the stars above;
At morn the compass veers."
And Loveman's soul—a soul of love—
Sings with his angel peers.

TO OUR MISSING BIRDS

The redbird will come to my window in spring,
And warble his wild, fresh notes;
The mocking bird even in winter will sing
When a dream on the south wind floats;
The thrush and the wren, again and again
Will sing ere the snow melts away;
And the fussy jaybird is bound to be heard
In December as well as in May;
But gone from the land is the little joree,
Once the source of my innocent joy.
And where, oh where can the bluebird be,
The bird I loved most when a boy?

The sparrow still chirps from peep-o-the-dawn
Till shadows of evening fall,
When chuck-wills-widow, all sad and forlorn,
Responds to quaint whippoor-wills call.
Whistling bob-white with cheering delight
Still gladdens his lady love,
While floats on the breeze from green woodland trees
The sweet plaintive coo of the dove.
But gone from the land is the little joree
Once the source of such innocent joy,
And where, oh where can the bluebird be,
The bluebird I loved when a boy?

MACK

Think what you may, for man and beast
There's a nature's social union
Through which a dog, to say the least,
With human holds communion.
Dog Latin's deep, too deep for speech—
It never can be spoken—
But greater truth than words can reach
It tells by sign and token.
A whiff, a sneeze, a bright'ning eye,
Or bark deep welcome baying;
A paw upheld to shake "goodbye,"
A parting wish conveying.

Old Mack's a collie—brave and bold—
We've romped and played together;
True comrades when the days are cold
And friends all sorts of weather.
He smiles and laughs, his pearly teeth
Through curling lips a-showing;
Or poses with his paws beneath
His chin, with look so knowing,
Then wags his tail in friendly way
That never leaves me guessing;
For words themselves could never say
One-half that he's expressing.

He loves three children I adore
Jule, Rene, and Mary Helen;
And 'tis a joy to watch these four,
Their hearts with rapture swelling,
Play hunting games and circus, too,
Till Grandma's broom is showing.
Then Mack's tail wags, "I wish she knew
What dogs and boys are knowing."
"And poets, too," my heart replies,
Responsive to the glances
He casts on me from honest eyes
As out the door he prances.

* * * * * * * * * * *

And now the children are in bed—
Perhaps in dreamland playing—
I write the verses you've just read,
While Mack the moon is baying.

TO THE WREN

The song you sing today, sweet wren,
Is the song I heard when a boy;
Your little throat now—like my young heart then—
Is ringing with notes of joy.

You sing me back to a sunny clime,
You are wreathing me with a spell;
The wild fresh joys of boyhood time
In my sin-seared bosom swell.

It's many and many a year since then,
But I love you the same, sweet bird;
My heart is a child's when songs of the wren
'Mid the cares of life is heard.

NACOOCHEE

I.

Long years ago, in the evening shade
  Of the beautiful mount called Yonah,
Nacoochee dwelt, an Indian maid,
  In the tent of her sire, Kanonah,
  In the tent of the chief, Kanonah.
In that woodland wild, when she was a child,
  None knew her but to love her;
For the charms she wore were such as bore
  The angels watching above her,
  Bright angels watching above her.

II.

And this maiden loved as few can love
  The brave young prince, Chattahoochee,
But the Chief had sworn by the lands above
  None ever should wed Nacoochee,
  His daughter, the fair Nacoochee.
And this was why the light of her eye
  Shone on cheeks all ashen and sober,
As the stars at night send a misty light
  Thru the lonesome sky of October,
  Through the leaden sky of October.

III.

And thus it was the Princess sighed
As she left the tent of Kanonah,
To meet her Prince and become his bride
On the top of the mountain Yonah,
On the grand old summit of Yonah.
Her heart beat high, as nearer the sky,
So darkly bright above her,
And now 'tis passed, she's happy at last
In the fond embrace of her lover,
In the warm embrace of her lover.

IV.

The sun had set, and bright the stars
In heaven's vault were shining;
Kanonah, the chief of many scars,
In his tent sat sad repining,
In his tent sat lone repining.
With grief oppressed he smote his breast,
And swore by all his power
That naught could save the daring brave
Who had robbed him of his flower,
Nacoochee, his wigwam flower.

V.

Uprising then he grasped his bow;
And, up the mountain flying,
He reached the lofty summit, lo!
He hears Nacoochee sighing,
His lost Nacoochee sighing.

"Why, Maiden, sigh when love is nigh?
To thy tender heart no stranger;
The spirit light that puts to flight
All thoughts of care and danger,
All dreams of care and danger."

VI.

These soft words her lover spoke,
And spake no more forever;
E'en while his voice the stillness broke,
Kanonah grasped the quiver,
Kanonah seized the quiver.
Withdrew a dart, aimed at the heart
Of the daring Chattahoochee;
The arrows gleam, in the moon's bright beam,
Falls on the eye of Nacoochee,
The dark, soft eye of Nacoochee.

VII.

"Oh, spare his life!" the maiden cries,
To her lover's bosom clinging.
But the cord is loosed! the arrow flies,
A dirge on the night wind singing,
A dirge on the night wind singing.
The poisoned dart pins fast her heart
To her lover's bosom core;
And, face to face, in Death's embrace
They are joined to part no more,
In Heaven they'll part no more.

COHUTTA TOWN

To Cohutta town, Cohutta town
The mountain roads run up and down;
Churches, mill, stores and hall—
Two dozen homes, but that's not all;
A school there is, and to and fro
Through mud-red roads the children go.

'Tis true, the meadows are as fair
Around Resaca—anywhere;
And at Varnelles and Tilton, too,
September sky's as soft a hue,
But at Cohutta to and fro
Through dust-gray roads more children go.

At Cohutta town, it can be said,
The past is buried with its dead;
The present lives—her golden light
Is shining on each hearthstone bright;
The Future smiles when to and fro
Through milk-white roads the children go.

KILDEE

Over the marshy plain,
Swift is thy flight!
Forth and back, again, again,
Thru the lonesome night.
Soft and plaintive is the note—
Wild, and weird, and free—
Coming from thy little throat,
Quaint and sad kildee.

Oh, with what feeling, rare,
Floats my soul along
Out in the moonlit air,
Captive by thy song!
Where the palm and bullrush grow
On the watery lea,
With thy song my fancies go,
Magical kildee.

Borne on thy dewy wing
Thru the darkening gloam,
All my thoughts go wandering
With thy song to roam;
And the voices of the dead
Seem calling unto me,
In a solemn chorus led
By thy sad "Kildee!"

Oh, thou minstrel of the night!
Bird of gloomy age!
Emblem of the spirit's flight
From its earthly cage!
When the shadows hover low,
Teach thy notes to me;
Singing through the gloom to go,
I would learn of thee.

MY HERITAGE

I love thy red old hills; their rugged reach
To low sand dunes where wild waves cry;
The lyric sound of surf upon thy beach;
Thy soughing pines 'mong mountains high.

When twilight sifts thru evening shadows gray
Thy hills are guardian angels unto me,
And boats agloam in the Georgian bay
Are dream-laden ships in a heavenly sea.

I love the silent language of the moon;
The sweet still song of stars at night;
The hush of morn; the glow of noon,
And a Georgian sunset's glorious light.

Thy wealth of sky and sea, my Georgia-land,
A heritage of dreams bestow on me.
Tho vague and half-expressed, these to command
No title e'er conveyed in simple fee.

MY LADY OF THE HILL

I watched my lady of the hill—
  And she was unaware—
Altho the wind was brisk and chill
  Her limbs were very bare.
Not many Eves without their leaves,
  More graceful are and fair.

When next I saw my lady, she—
  Not dreaming I was near—
Began to don her lingerie,
  'Twas springtime of the year.
In crepe-de-chine of gauzy green
  How sweet she did appear!

'Twas summer when I gazed once more
  Upon my lady fair;
A dress of richest green she wore,
  And flowers decked her hair—
Her tender smile did more beguile
  My heart right then and there.

'Tis autumn now, and I can see
  My lady any day;
For, oh! she is a lovely tree
  With foliage rich and gay;
Nor sweeter fruit, with shade to boot,
  Has ever cheered my way.

A GLORY DEPARTED

The mountains above the village,
With armies of trees sublime;
Titanic oaks and chestnuts,
Sentinel monarchs of time.

For centuries had they stood there—
Planted by God's own hand,
But man with his axe has felled them;
For greed had need of the land.

Now gone the kingdom of beauty,
Where's the wealth can pay
The cost of producing the splendor
Torn from the mountains away?

I weep in fond recollection
Of charms that over me hung;
The trees on the mountains whispering,
Each quivering leaf a tongue.

They spoke in tones primeval
Secrets no more to be heard;
Only the woods could tell them,
They melt at touch of a word.

THE LAND OF THE CHEROKEES

Have you heard of the land of the Cherokees,
With its wonderful streams and beautiful trees?
Of its flowers abloom, and the wild perfume
That floats like a dream on the evening breeze?

Have you heard of Echota, the capital town,
And the brave old chief with feathery crown?
Of the warrior band and the pow-wow grand
In the light of the moon when the sun goes down?

Far away in the past this quaint land lies,
And around it the mists obscure arise;
It is only in dreams we may hear the shrill screams
Of its eagles afloat in their native skies.

But its rivers glide on in rhythmical flow
Through fields of today, from the weird long-ago;
The cold Chickamauga, the slow Connesauga,
Like their musical names, gurgle soft and low.

From the gold-bearing hills comes the rich Chestatee,
Through the mountains to the north breaks the
Hiawassee,
And the romping Ellijay joins the bouncing Cartekay
To frolic in the rapids of the Coosawattee.

In the laughing of the ripples of the sweet Salacoa,
  In the falling of the current of the silvery Toccoa,
In the roarings of Tallulah, and the splashings of
    Yahoola
  Are the wild and varied volumes of a never-written
    lore.

And we listen to the song of the sad Etowah;
  In his voice is a sob, a refrain from afar,
While the rough Chattahoochee makes love to
    Nacoochee
  In the shade of the Vale of The Evening Star.

Than the moans of Oostanaula no dirge can sadder be,
  For he heard the parting groans of the banished
    Cherokee.
Thus in music shall roll the Indian's proud soul
  As long as his rivers flow into the sea.

THE CALL OF THE SOUTH

From the sweet sunny South, the realm of romance,
A region renowned by story and song,
Where the hues of the rainbow tremblingly dance
On flower and fruit all the year long;

From the sweet, sunny South where cotton makes white
The field once crimson with battle-shed gore,
And the blue-bird nestles with calm delight
In the mouth of the cannon, hushed evermore;

From the sweet, sunny South where mansions arose
With Phoenix-like magic from ashes of war,
And time has made friends of brothers, once foes,
And healed forever the national scar;

From the sweet sunny South, where factory smoke—
Proud banner of industry—floats on the air
O'er cities where once dread war-clouds broke
And melted to ruins in battle's red glare;

From the sweet sunny South, God's favored clime,
Comes to the world a loud welcome call.
Joy-ringing bells, in musical chime,
Are telling of happiness found here for all.

THE LAST OF THE LANDMARKS

He worked in the world for the worldly
  With a love for humanity. Then
To rescue a life from folly
  Or lead one to virtue again
Was the goal of his life's ambition
  As he worked with the children of men.

His heart went out to the loved ones
  That gathered around him for aid;
As he taught them their lessons from books
  A voice within him said,
"The heart, as well as the mind,
  Is looking to you to be fed."

Do you know what he gave the children?
  'Twas prayer, well mixed with the rod,
And he read to the hearts that were human
  The words of Humanity's God
That point the road of righteousness
  By saints and prophets trod.

Do you ask what time was given
  For the Holy Book and prayer?
"First for the kingdom of heaven,"
  The Master says, "prepare,"
So he prayed and he read at seven,
  And God and His angels were there.

Oh, the joy, the bliss of that hour!
And the silence that over it fell!
Like the hush of the morn where flowers bloom
Untouched by sin in peaceful dell.
How like the bursting buds
Young hearts with rapture swell!

He worked in the world for the worldly—
And some were Christian men.
They gave rebuke for prayer in school
And loving talks, and then
Advised more time be spent at ball
With a brief, "Praise God, Amen."

He tried to be brief in his reading,
And gave three minutes, about
For the cry of the deathless soul within
To the Infinite God without—
To lead his flock to heaven
By the world's most practical route.

Said the world, as he worked with her darlings,
"Not words, but deeds are things."
Yet, thought is the soul of words,
And from them action springs;
For thought soars high or low,
Borne onward by words—its wings.

A MOONSHINER'S ROMANCE

The following story is a metrical version of an adventure that furnished sensational and amusing news items to the Atlanta papers many years ago. Though the newspaper reports and the tale now told vary in form and tone, the happenings on which each is based are these:

A young woman, thinly clad and without shoes, walked more than a hundred miles to visit her lover, a moonshiner, serving a term in Fulton county jail. At that time there was no federal prison in Atlanta.

After many inquiries and much fatigue she at length gained audience with the kind-hearted jailor, and, in mountain dialect, begged that she might share her lover's prison cell.

"For I ain't got a dime, and nowher' to go," she explained, "I ain't a kerrin' fer nuthin' but Bob. Wher' is he? I jes got ter see 'im. Can't I stay in jail with him 'til weuns kin go back to the cove together?"

"My dear girl," replied the jailor, "I can have Bob to meet you here in my office. For the jail is crowded with moonshiners, and he is just one of the twenty that live, eat, and sleep in the same cage. If he had a cell to himself it would still be improper for you to sleep there—positively unlawful."

Green and unsophisticated, but beautiful as the wild deer that turns a pleading eye to the hunter whose arrow quivers in her breast, this trembling mountain maid gave the jailor a questioning and accusing look more eloquent than words. The simple-minded child of nature loved with love's utmost truth and tenderness, and, ignorant of civilizations and governments, she felt herself the victim of a cruel and relentless power that had no right to invade the precincts of her native hills—the only world she knew. Evidently she regarded the jailor as the incarnation of that dreadful power she could not comprehend—the law, the court, the jury and the executioner.

* * * *

In good old Anglo-Saxon words of truth and forcefulness that need no rules of grammar to gain a listening ear the maiden told of how she had walked, weeks ago, to her county-site to procure a marriage license; how she had scaled the rugged mountains to reach a cove where Bob had built a nest for him and her among the rocks; had cleared a garden spot; had bought a cow, a pig and some chickens, fixing a place for them near the still, that they might feed on the used mash; how, too, the minister had promised to meet her and Bob in their mountain retreat to make them man and wife.

Then followed the story of her disappointment, when on reaching the still she found it completely demolished, and Bob—

Here she threw a torn and soiled marriage license to the jailor, and cried pleadingly, "Oh, let us be married here! Let me be wher' he is. Can't I?"

As the jailor looked into that sad beautiful face, lit with the unforgetable light of the mountains—for he, too, had been born among the tree-clad peaks—he answered tenderly, "Yes, if we have to turn the death cell into a bridal chamber."

That "yes" was the incident that attracted the attention of newspaper reporters, and the public craving for the unusual was fully gratified by the highly amusing development of the story. The wedding day was pictured, together with the assignment of the jail birds to the death chamber, where the honeymoon was spent. The quaint sage-brush remarks of the groom; the ludicrous sayings of the bride and many other laughable incidents, threw the light of humor on an affair that deserved more serious treatment; for was it not from sources like this that Scott learned to exalt the lowly mountaineers of his native land and lit Scottish history with a glow of romance that charms the world?

I know 'mong Scotia's rugged hills
No sweeter life can be
Than blooms on Georgia's varied slope
From her mountains to the sea—
Nor marsh nor cove less charming are
Than bight and loch and lea.

'Mong the mountains of Murray where a smooth-flowing creek,
Encircling a cove, rushes gladly below,
And sunshine and shadows alternately seek
Their way thru the laurels that everywhere grow;
Hidden from storm and the stern winter's chill,
Away from the world with its fashion and care,
The moonshiner works at his moonshine still—
But the little blind god with his arrow is there.

Pure as pearl in its shell there wades thru the waves
A maiden a-blushing; her bare ankles white
The cool crystal water gracefully laves
But veils not their beauty from the clear morning light.
All that the fold of her scant robe conceals
Of the Venus-like form of the fair mountain maid
Is glassed by the water; that mirror reveals
The form of a nymph, the grace of a niad.

Watch her! You shall see the maiden go
From the stream in all her charms;
You shall see that breast of snow
Encircled in her lover's arms.
Listen! You shall hear the story old
Of love and truth. In all the climes,
In all the tongues it has been told.
Sarah's voice in gladness chimes,

"I shall wed you, Robert Power,
Tho life itself risked must be;
My daddy's will another hour
Shall not come 'twixt you and me."
Then her laughing lover—glad—
Ecstatic—to and fro the maiden swings—
In love's wild delirium mad,
Unmindful that the day has wings.

I know not how it came to be—
This dove within the night-hawk's nest;
Sarah resting peacefully
On her outlaw lover's breast;
This modern "Lady of the Lake"—
Sarah, whom a blundering bee
Might for a honied lily take,
Alone with this moonshiner—She?

Ye godly dames in fashion's ring,
Ye college bred with airs refined,
Scoff not; the simple song I sing
Is of the heart and not the mind.
Oh, happy love, where love like this abides!
Unfettered by your social world,
In hearts like theirs the bliss of heaven abides
With purest joys of earth unfurled.

In rapture sped the golden hours
  From morn to daylight's fading—
At dewey eve the deputies
  Upon that still came raiding.
For love is love, and law is law,
  The raiding ends the wooing;
Ill-fated pair! That hour saw
  What seemed their souls' undoing.

Her face had blushed with love's warm glows;
  It now is pale with sorrow.
Her lover bold, full well she knows,
  Will be in jail tomorrow.
His heart had drunk at love's full tide;
  His voice still rings with gladness;
Dissembling all in vain to hide,
  He but reveals his sadness.

The pale moon looked in tender grace
  Down on the parting lovers,
And with a cloud she hides her face
  From what her light discovers.
Man may be stern we all confess,
  A brute, a stone, a clod,
But cry of woman in distress
  To him's the voice of God.

When Sarah, pleading soft and low,
  Asked that hers might be
To prison with her love to go,
  Since both could not be free,
Law yielded right of way to love;
  A minister was found,
Who, in the name of God above,
  Their lives together bound.

The jail to them a palace seemed;
  A world, their prison cell.
Of myrtle blooms and birds they dreamed
  And rocks where wild things dwell,
The beauty of the landscape's not out there,
  Within the soul it lies;
There is no darkness anywhere
  When love-land lights the eyes.

WHERE THE MOONSHINE STILL IS CALLING

In the wigwam of the paleface,
In the land of Coca-Cola,
Where the mild and gentle Grapejuice
Takes the scalp of old Mint Julip,
And the flaunting Cu-ti-cura
Zemos with the New Skin
There, 'mong Lydia Pinkham cromos,
Have I sat and coughed for hours.
I, the coughing cat's pajamas,
At the drug store on the corner

Where the Volstead tribe of maidens
Sip and gossip 'round the tables,
Talk about the dance and movies,
Vamp the soft heads for the soft drinks,
Like a Fordson on a rampage,
Like a bullfrog in a desert,
Like a fool I sat and coughed there.

Then the big chief No-bananas,
Miles away among the mountains,
Heard me coughing in my anguish,
Came unto me in a vision,
Beck'ning to me from his wigwam
In the deep and lonesome forest.

By the moon-pool first I found him
With the moonshine all around him.
He, the big chief No-bananas,
Biggest broncho of boot-leggers,
Cured me of acute bronchitis.

No-bananas had a daughter,
Chugalugah, Laughing Water,
Like unto a Minnehaha,
Fairer than a Gloria Swanson—
All the white squaws of the movies.

By the moon-pool first I found her
With the moonshine all around her—
Through the moonshine all within me—
Saw her dabbling in the moon-pool.
Then it was I thus addressed her,
"Dusky daughter of the forest,
Come and share my postie-toasties,
Come and push my go-care for me,
Where the Mellins and the Horlicks,
Feed and fatten cherub off-springs."

"Go," she said, "You are a cave-man.
I must have a Valentino
With a voice like great Caruso,
With a voice like ocean sobbing.
In a canoe built by Packard
That can float o'er ruts and gulleys,
Translate mudholes into moon-pools,
We shall joy-ride to the city."

Then me thought the air grew denser.
I woke to see the drink dispenser
Pick a dope-glass from the floor.
Though the silence was unbroken—
Not a flapper yet had spoken—
I knew that glass was not unbroken,
Up I coughed a quarter more.

Then from out that drug store turning,
All my soul within me yearning—
As it never yearned before—
For that distant land of Aiden,
Where the moon-pool and the maiden
Charmed my soul, with moon-shine laden—
Just a dream and nothing more.

POEMS
OF AFFECTION

THE LOVE THAT LIVES

I did not love her for her eyes,
Tho softer they than summer skies;
I did not love her for her lips,
Tho bee no sweeter nectar sips;
I did not love her for her hair
That might to Venus' own compare;
Nor for her form and graceful mien,
Tho she walked a goddess and looked a queen;
I did not love her just for things
Time takes away on his fleet wings;
For now these fleeting charms are gone
My love for her lives on, and on.
The love that was not born to die
Is love that loves and knows not why.
There's something deep the heart within
Outshines, outlives the fairest skin.
Through wrinkling cares and wrecking pains
The beauty of the soul remains
To shine on cheeks no longer fair
And place the hues of heaven there.

THE SWEETEST SONG

The sweetest song that ever was sung,
Do you know by whom and when?
It was not from the lips of an artist flung
For the praise or the gold of men.
Nay; not from the opera's gilded stage,
Nor e'en from the sacred choir,
Has come the song of every age
Most potent to inspire.

In a vine-clad cot from the world apart,
Under the star-lit sky,
A mother sings from a mother's heart
A mother's lullaby.

The sweetest child in all the land,
Do you know whose child and where?
Not the poor rich child in a mansion grand,
With its pride and worldly care,
But the rich poor child in that humble cot,
Under the star-lit sky,
Who hears that song and forgets it not,
A mother's lullaby.

The grandest man under the sun,
Shall I tell you whence he came?
Not at the top was his life begun,
Nay; not with a father's fame.
But he caught a glimpse of Heaven above,
From that home 'neath a star-lit sky,
As he drank with her milk a mother's love
And heard her lullaby.

The queenliest woman Earth e'er knew,
Did she grace a worldly throne?
Nay, not so; but a mother true,
With God and Heaven her own,
She cradled her babe in a manger bare,
Beneath the star-lit sky,
And angels joined in a chorus there
To Mary's lullaby.

BESIDE LIFE'S LOWLY GATE

There are lives that reach the heights supreme
Where Fame and Glory call,
Their deeds are theme for poet's dream,
Their praise is sung by all.
But I sing not a mighty name,
Nor one of proud estate—
Just a woman pure who lives obscure
Beside Life's lowly gate.

In the breath of spring and its gentle stir
Into bud and foliage green
The God of Things revealed to her
The beauty of worth unseen.
Hid 'neath leaves is the violet fair,
And such has been her fate;
But she has breathed a perfume rare
Beside Life's lowly gate.

The world sees not the trellis beneath
The vines that unto it cling,
Nor cares for the cord that binds the wreath
That encircles the brow of a king.
But the God of Things—He knoweth all,
And oft what men call great,
In the light of His truth, is exceedingly small
Beside Life's lowly gate.

God spake to her, and I did not know—
In my sins I could not hear—
But I saw His love in her life-depth glow
Like a star in waters clear;
And I who was weary of the day—
Blind worshiper of fate—
Thank God for the light that streams my way
From out Life's lowly gate.

LOVE IMMORTAL

When the sun, grown old,
Is dark and cold,
And the planets are faded and gone;
When never his light
Makes the moon's face bright—
Oh, say, can love live on?

Every world and star
In the universe, far
As the voice of God can call;
Count sphere on spheres
Thru countless years,
And love outlives them all.

When worlds have decayed
Love, heaven arrayed,
Will bloom in the soul of me:
Not in the cold sod
But the bosom of God
I shall rest, sweet love, with thee.

TOO LATE

There came to my window one morning in spring
A mother-bird's cry from a heart distressed;
In vain had she fought with fluttering wing
'Gainst a snake with its fangs in her nest.
Alas, poor bird! Too late you found
Your nest was built too near the ground.

There are moans in the world like the wails of that bird,
Under-tones in the noise of the marts;
At the show, at the dance they may not be heard,
But mutter and flutter in poor broken hearts.
For serpents of hell fatten and grow
On nestlings of homes that are built too low.

MY DREAM-LAND

Time, you scamp, you've made me old,
You've touched my hair with white;
But in Memory's magic Dream-land,
My spirit, feather-light,
Is roving fields of pleasure
'Neath boyhood's golden skies,
And by me walks a little girl
With tender, loving eyes.

We dreamed then of the future;
I dream now of the past;
Both pictures, mingling in my soul,
Ecstatic glamours cast.
What was, and is, in Dream-land
Is sweeter than the real
When lovelight guilds the shadows
In that realm of the ideal.

REFLECTIONS

Down on the village, sleeping still
As some old painting rare,
I gaze from off my favorite hill
Through autumn's hazy air;
And here, in retrospective mood,
I cannot choose but link
The chain of hours that thus I've stood
To gaze and dream and think.

'Twas many and many a year ago,
On a morning fair as this,
When first yon smiling scene below
Enwrapped my soul with bliss.
How oft that smiling scene, since then,
My inmost soul hath charmed;
And now I'm old, I feel again
My spirit strangely warmed.

For all this wealth in simple fee
Men struggle with a will;
Yet all the town belongs to me
In the landscape from my hill.
'Tis sweet to think in life's decay
That joys of heart and mind
May light the path to heavenly day
And leave a glow behind.

WHEN LOVE DIED

I did not nurture as I ought
  Your tender love for me;
Yet, deep within my soul I thought
  How happy I would be
To make you glad; to please; to praise;
To spur you on to brighter days
And wreathe your face with smiles always.

So many deeds I planned to do;
  I meant to sing a song
To lift and cheer the heart of you,
  When faith is weak to make you strong.
But most of all, I thought of things;
The house—not home—that money brings;
Expensive cars, and gowns, and rings.

A pendulum twixt love and pride,
  I swung from you away;
And then, returning to your side,
  My soul forgot to say
The tender words of sentiment.
My thoughts, on greed and gain intent,
Back to the world of business went.

Back to the world that knows not you,
  Back to the selfish mart;
Money must come, for bills come due—
  For gold, I coined my heart.
The paths of trade to greed must trend;
The means I sought became the end;
To gold, not love, my knee must bend.

Heart-sick and weary, I turn from your gate,
  And up the marble stair
I reach the door where servants wait—
  My only welcomers there.
Through revelry loud, to my den I creep;
Bank stock is down, I cannot sleep;
With guests you laugh; alone, I weep.

Midas, Midas, cursed by gold!
  Tantalus, tantalized!
Your granted wish ten-thousand fold
  More misery realized.
Though mirth and music loud may ring,
Where fashion's a queen and wealth a king,
There money's a god, and love—a thing.

In shame and pain I bow my head,
  Your heart was crucified;
On a couch of gold, love lies dead,
  In a castle wrecked by pride.
The sin was mine; I did you wrong,
And now my night is dark and long—
I need your love, your help, your song.

SORROW

Within the cloud there is a power
That brings forth beauty's form,
And pins the rain-bow, like a flower,
On the bosom of the storm.

TO MARY

Silent and still are the depths that are deepest
'Neath billows that never can break on the shore;
In fathomless love, my Mary, thou sleepest
Where song is a dream, hushed and supreme,
Deep in my life's most innermost core.

Unthought-like thoughts that cannot be spoken—
Half-wake memory, swells of the soul
That break not in words—let silence betoken;
No song can impart the throbs of my heart,
The depths of emotions within it that roll.

LOVE

A soul in the desert lying—
The death-haunted Desert of Sin;
Without are the dead and the dying,—
An angel sin-prisoned within!
From a rock in the wilderness smitten
The life-giving water gushed;
From the heart on which Christ has written
What volumes of love have rushed!

In depths of my sin and disaster
My life was a wilderness wild;
But spirits love-writ by the master
Upon me like angels have smiled.
I would give what to me has been given,
Heartfuls of love and good cheer;
I would water with showers of heaven
God's flowers a-drooping down here.

IN THE HARBOR

An aged man with hoary hair,
A little child played 'round his chair
And clambered on his knee.
The careworn face with heaven smiled;
Like an angel laughed the child,
As happy as could be.

Where life begins and where life ends,
Near the Father's door meet these friends—
And each with empty hand.
A soul grown tired of earthly years
And one untouched by sins and fears
Are near the golden strand.

And this is why the baby fair
Loves to climb on Grandpa's chair
To greet him with a smile.
These friendly ships in harbor free,
One nearing home, one bound for sea,
Would furl their sails awhile.

GIFTS EXCHANGED

I stood at the gate of the world.
Ambition said, "Grasp the view!"
My blood through its channels flew,
Mad-drunken with joy, like wine.
Wealth, honor and fame I beheld.
My heart said, "These shall be mine."

I went my way through the world,
To gain and conquer, I fought.
I achieved the ends I sought
But to sigh and whimper and moan;
Ambition's goal achieved,
Love's treasure was yet unknown.

God said, "Sell all, and for me."
I laid my all at His feet,
Gave up life's bitter for sweet—
All that I had I have given—
My cup that was full of the world
I emptied; He filled it with Heaven.

THE UNATTAINABLE

My soul is a bird whose yearning desire
  Is beaten and baffled by fate;
Soar where it will, evading and higher
  Away in the blue is its mate.
Still would I dream on, bright visions of thee
  Pursuing, O loved ideal!
Though never, alas, this heart of me
  Shall throb 'gainst the heart of the real.

TO MADIE

Today from out thine eyes—bedimmed with tears—
  There beamed into my life a tender light,
As when, through riven cloud, a star appears
  To bloom in what were else a starless night.

Thy voice, albeit sad, to me was bliss—
  'Twas thine own self dissolved in note and trill—
And fell upon my soul as falls the kiss
  Of gentle south-wind on a wintry hill.

Thy lips, thy cheeks, thy sad but radiant smile,
  Through sorrow's veil shone sweet to me;
And thou did'st tell thy grief but to beguile
  My thoughts from grief to thee *and only thee.*

Oh, wonder not that beauty such as thine
  My soul from dreams of sorrow broke.
Thy griefs but zephyrs are, thou tender vine,
  And I the tempest-beaten oak.

WOMAN

Woman is a flower,
  That fills with fragrance rare
Man's every breathing hour,
  When he gives his loving care.
But crushed the tender bosom,
  How soon he is bereft
Of the sweetness of the blossom—
But a thorny stem is left.

CLAIR

(Tenderly dedicated to her Mother)

———

I

Oh, weak are my words to the thoughts of my brain
And the feelings that rise in my heart;
Oft have I sought expression in vain
To sensations that thrill me with exquisite pain
Too pure and too holy for words to impart.
The dreams of my soul into crystals congeal
That reflect less of earth than the sky;
I weep and I weep, but cannot reveal
The visions that brighten the tears in my eye.

II

'Tis the source of my thoughts that makes them so deep;
And the cause, the feeling so rare:
For I stand o'er a grave where my love lies asleep,
And memory floods my soul, as I weep,
With visions of beautiful Clair.
Like a flower that comes from the bosom of spring
She came from the goodness of God;
Like a flower she bloomed, a heavenly thing,
To brighten the paths that we trod.

III

Like a flower she gave forth sweetest perfume
When affliction her young life pressed;
And even in death, like a crushed fair bloom,
She sweetened our grief and lighted our gloom
With love's holy radiance blest.
An angel asleep in her coffin enshrined,
Like a lily in a snow-white vase—
Fairer was she than the love-wreath entwined
That encircled her heavenly face.

IV

God's thoughts are the flowers; and everywhere
When I see them in spring-time bright,
They will breathe of their playmate, beautiful Clair,
And in winter's gloom these memories rare
Will fill all my soul with their light.
Eternal spring will come some day,
And out from the bursting sod
My flower will rise to bloom alway
In the beautiful Garden of God.

"ALL THE YEAR ROUND"

Christmas comes with love and cheer;
It lasts a day, why not a year?
It may, it does! In the lives of men,
Everywhere and everywhen,
The Christ-child may be born again;
Born in heart-throbs, tender words
Of love that soothes like songs of birds;
Born in thoughts and kindly deeds
And laughter-light this old world needs;
Born in work and play and prayer;
Born in joy 'mid grief and care,
To make it Christmas everywhere.

AN OPTIMISTIC SKEPTIC

Today my little six-year boy—
His face aglow with Christmas joy—
Said, "Daddy, I'm glad because
I know you are old Santa Clause;
Bill says you are, and I'm so glad
To have old Santa for a dad.
Bill says he thinks it's also true
The Devil's just your Daddy, too."

Thru prayer, I climb my father's knee,
For He is Santa Clause to me;
His hand in gifts of love I see;
And deep my trusting heart within
He whispers, "Child, the Devil—sin,
Save in men's lives has never been.
The Earth beneath and Heaven above,
Are filled with good, and thru them move,
The Infinite God, whose name is Love."

ANNIE

The dove that cooes at eventide,
The hawthorn blossom at its side
  Are gentle, pure, and sweet;
But gentler, purer is her mind
Than flower or bird of any kind
  That poet's eye can meet.

From dimpling waves resplendent gleam
The trembling stars—a broken dream
  Of heaven on the sea—
But oh, her tender love-lit eyes!
They rival all the seas and skies
  That ever shone on me.

A dew-drop from an angel's wing
In the lily's cup—earth's fairest thing—
  Reflected light of heaven;
Thus in the chalice of my love
Is held a radiance from above—
  The heart that she has given.

MEMORIES

I flew from thy charms—like a bird from the wood,
To seek in the desert a nest—
I've tried to forget thee, I've tried to be good,
But the fire still burns in my breast.
My heart is aflame, there's a throb in my throat,
On my tongue is a song I would sing;
My soul, in rapturous dreamings afloat,
Unto thee—and thee only—takes wing.

As that bird in the desert springs up to the sky
To look where his lost fountain gleams,
Thirsting and longing, feasting his eye,
Disdaining to drink of the deserts foul streams,
Thus rising above the moment, I see
Bright visions of joy that I've quaffed;
I fly from the present, so bitter to me,
To drink from the past love's old sweet draught.

MY NEIGHBORS

Oh, would you know in this big world
  Who's really up and really down?
Then scoff not at the pauper's rags
  Nor count too high the monarch's crown.
We measure men too much by things—
  The accidents of rank or birth.
The poor we scorn, but all are kings
  That wear the crown of honest worth.

I have a neighbor, rich and grand,
  With bank stock, cash, and notes galore;
Another neighbor tills his land,
  But which is rich and which is poor?
From a secluded hill-side spot,
  Unseen I watched these two;
Here both a mansion and a cot
  Are plainly in my view.

A pebbled walk leads up to one,
  Where stately columns rise
From floor of costly marble stone
  As bright as sun-lit skies.
There seated in an easy-chair,
  My neighbor looks around
Methinks with an uneasy air
  Upon his beauteous ground.

The well-kept lawn is velvet green,
And fountains sparkle bright
Where romping child is never seen,
Nor woman's smile doth light.
His soul, by greed and gain deceived,
In loneliness must moan;
The wealth he sought he has achieved,
But love he hath not known.

He hears a bird sing to his mate
Upon a downy nest,
Nor knows, poor fool, the real estate
Is by that bird possessed.
Within his gates I have no room,
But o'er the hedge I see
The flowers nod, and their perfume
The south-wind wafts to me.

Ah, well! I watch my neighbor's things
With one regret today;
I'll miss the joy the vision brings
When I have moved away.
But then I know 'tis just as true
My neighbor, too, must go;
Must give up things, like me and you,
For God hath fixed it so.

But what is that? A sound I hear—
A rippling music stream;
A baby's laugh, loud and clear;
A floating heavenly dream!
The sounds of love—of joy—of mirth—
From my poor neighbor's cot;
There may be sweeter sounds on earth,
But I have heard them not.

* * * * * *

The thought they bring to me is this:
(My eyes with tears are dim.)
It's not this neighbor's things I'll miss,
But all his folks and him.

A WISH FOR ANNIE

Love finds a way
On your wedding day,
Whether dollars be many or few;
Not the cost of the gift
Brings the spirit's uplift—
It's the wish that comes with it to you.

May your life current flow
Where the love-lights glow
As soft as the moonbeam's kiss;
May your boat ever glide
On a silvery tide
Of matrimonial bliss.

And when at last
Life's journey is past,
And the shadow of night bends low,
May you find sweet rest
In the Infinite's breast
Beyond the sunset's glow.

MY ROSE OF THE INDIAN SUMMER

In the winter of my life you came, Dear,
And with your Indian summer,
I trusted to the out-of-season sun,
December melted into June;
And, like a stream from the dwindling snow,
My sun-warmed spirit flowed
Thru halcyon days of dreamy splendor.

Your eyes were lit with morning's glow;
Your breath was as the south-wind's kiss;
Your voice a soul dissolved in note and trill,
And all the summer's golden sunsets
Nestled in your hair.

In the warmth and radiance of your smile—
Sunshine and shower to my heart—
A flower began to bloom; at first a trembling bud,
And soon a half-blown rose.
But as I gaze into its blushing bosom, I see—
As in a dream—the ghost of summer long ago.

In shadowy mist, beside me stands
The girl I loved when young.
She presses to my lips a phantom flower
From the springtime of her life and mine;
Frosted relic of youth's bright isle of dreams;
Crushed and bleeding soul of life's bright rose-time;
Immortal essence of the whitest flower heart e'er knew.
Its perfume lingers in my dream.

And now! The winter's breath is on the face
I hold within the hollow of my arm;
My late red rose that dared to brave the storm
Is blighted, all its petals torn and sere;
Its colors are discolored, its leaves are dead.

* * * * * * * *

There's a stir and a chill in the air—
  Stern winter claims his own;
The pseudo-goddess of the year
  No more usurps his throne.
But on her grave my late red rose,
  A frosted wreck, is thrown.

* * * * * * * *

Inexorable winter!

A MOTHER'S DAY REVERIE

I feel her charm in the light of spring,
I breathe her breath from the rose;
Her voice is heard in song of bird,
My dreams her beauty disclose.

Her spirit is robed in hues of the sky,
And glows in sunlight's embrace;
On earth, in air—thru all things fair—
Come visions of her sweet face.

Mother, woman, spirit comes
To lean my head on her breast;
To drown my care in her shining hair
While the throb in my throat finds rest.

In memory's shrine I bow at her knee
And feel her white hand on my head,
As nightly there I lisped a prayer
E'er she kissed me and tucked me in bed.

Mother of mine, love's fairest ideal!
'Mong all the white roses of May,
None sweeter can be than mem'ries of thee
That bloom in my bosom today.

IF

Her room was cosy, trim, and neat
Because her soul was pure and sweet;
But he with selfish humors mean—
A soul and body both unclean—
All blemished by a selfish life,
Was never fit for such a wife.

I see him now, as oft before,
A mud-stained wretch at her door;
I hear her voice, "Please clean your feet
Of mud they've gathered in the street."
Is it enough to clean his shoe
When heart and mind are muddy too?

If he would pause before her door
To clean his feet and something more;
Would bathe his soul in Memory's stream
That backward flows to Love's Young Dream,
The light that shone in boyhood skies
Might gleam afresh from the woman's eyes.

If he would pause to clean his life
Of mud that's incident to life;
If he would only enter there
With this his wish and this his prayer:
"God make my home a home of love,
A type of that which is above."

If he would leave his cares behind
And never speak a word unkind;
If to her heart his heart he pressed
As pure as that within her breast;
If he and I—mankind I mean
We'd see the world "a-coming clean."

THE STAR AND CROSS

One star alone among the host of spheres
  Unmoved remains thru all the countless years,
Save that constant constellation bright,
  The Southern Cross, whose guiding light
Directs the sailor's course beyond the line
  Where that *one star* does not shine.

A Mariner on life's great sea,
  There is one Star that guideth me
How rough or smooth the waves I stem,
  The blessed Star of Bethlehem!
And should that Star fade from my eyes
  Another Guide is in the skies.
North or South, I fear no loss
As long as shine the Star and Cross.

DIDACTIC
AND REFLECTIVE

A FROG'S A FROG

A frog in low and marshy ground
Where mud and trash and filth abound
Did croak and croak in accents harsh
A sad complaint against the marsh.
"Ah, me!" said he, "If I could be
Exalted to some lofty tree,
No feathered songster of the spring,
No nightingale could me outsing."

The rain poured down, the creek rose high,
The frog was lifted to the sky.
The waters fell, the frog had lit
Twixt limbs of lofty oak to sit.
He tried to sing, but the breezes bore
The same harsh croakings as before.
Know this truth a frog's a frog,
Perched on high or sunk in bog.
A bird on the ground with broken wing
Can look to the sky and a sweet song sing.

My moral is plain: It's better to be
A bird on the ground than a frog in the tree.

LIFE IS A BOOK

Life is a book of strange reading,
The days are the pages we've passed;
Hard are the words, and the spelling
More difficult grows to the last.
Let Truth be our lamp, and the meaning
Her light on the FINIS shall cast.

TO OUR BOYS

"Idleness, the devil's shop;
Ignorance, expensive crop"—
  Sayings old and true.
Heed them, my boy, today,
Profit by them while you may;
Listen to your conscience say,
  "There's much for boys to do."

Ask the bum with bloated face
What his first step to disgrace—
  Loafing on the street.
Others went to school to learn,
Ambition in their souls did burn,
To him who dared his books to spurn
  Idleness was sweet.

Learn to labor and to wait;
Trust in work, not in fate—
  No such thing as lucky star.
By your acts you rise and fall;
Honor, Fame and Glory call;
But their portals close to all
  You must push the gates ajar.

VETUS MELIUS EST

Tickle my taste with the tinkling chime
Of the grapy-juicy modern rhyme;
But seal not all that classic lore,
The priceless, mellow wines of yore.
Old Homer without mortal eyes
In dream and truth saw visions rise.
They who in him no beauties find—
Not Homer but themselves are blind.
Great Pindar's odes and pæns clear
Still have charms to please the ear;
Sweet Virgil's harp and ringing lays
Of Horace—in Rome's golden days—
Echoed in themes of Ariosto,
Awoke the genius of Tasso,
Gave Dante's torch Olympic fire,
And tuned our Milton's heavenly lyre.

TO THE GRAND CANYON

I loved thee when a boy; though to me
Thou wert a vision of the mental eye
From books and pictures caught. But now I see
Thy splendor as it is before me lie
Vast, matchless, and supreme, against the sky!
As if old ocean, in his grandest swell,
Stood still, and all his heaving billows high
To castles turned, and rainbow colors fell
From mists of crested foam upon their walls to dwell.

IN THE SHADOW

In the shadow of the world
The realm of darkness lies;—
In the shadow of the world
The stars of heaven rise.
In the shadow of the world
Earth-glamour fades and dies;—
In the shadow of the world
God's lamps are in the skies.
In the shadow of the world
My soul in sorrow sighs;—
In the shadow of the world
Are gleams of angel's eyes.

"SIC TRANSIT"

When e'er I see a ranting cheat
  Exult in tumult, noise, and cheers,
I think of dust beneath his feet
Where mortal pride and vain conceit
  Must rot a million years.

WORRY

"Never trouble trouble
Till trouble troubles you."
It's not a very human,
But a proper thing to do,
For I hardly need to tell you—
I know you know the same—
The worst of all our troubles
Are the ones that never came.

What we oft mistake for trouble
Are those foxes of the mind—
Disdainful Dread, frantic Fear,
And Shame that skulks behind.
They eat our grapes of happiness,
And leave us but the skin
With all the juicy sweet pressed out,
But bitter pulp left in.

Now wouldn't it be wiser
To laugh these foxes 'way?
With Faith and Hope a-ragging them,
The little beasts can't stay.
Then let's to work and smiling!
This old world's hard to beat;
"With every rose we get a thorn,
But ain't the roses sweet?"

SOUL TONIC

Sorrow and work—the bitters of life—
  Enrich and strengthen the soul;
Tho sweet slothful ease, with bloat-germs rife,
  Is a morsel that many would roll.

God pity the man who never knew care,
  Whose bosom ne'er heaves a sigh;
There's a strength, a charm, a feeling rare
  That trouble alone can buy.

THE TEST

Some where some when, some book of ancient lore—
  Perhaps the Talmud—brought to me this tale
How Sheba's Queen to court of Judea bore
  Two wreaths; mock flowers one, the other real.
But which mimetic, which was nature's hue;
  What charm from hand of God or artist fell;
Which crystal drop was art's, which morning dew
  No critic's eye in Sheba's court could tell.

"Here at thy feet I come, O, mighty King,
  Whose fame thy wisdom great hath oft enhanced,
Of these two wreaths that unto thee I bring—
  But do not touch—judge, if thou canst."
(Thus Sheba spake to test the Monarch's power)
  "If by thy knowledge thou with eye discern
Between the natural and the man-made flower,
  For thee my heart's esteem shall brighter burn."

The King beheld with mind in doubt perplexed,
  But through a window chanced to see
A tiny, buzzing insect come. No longer vexed,
  He watched the honey-searching bee.
A moment poised in air above the throne,
  The bee espied the flowers beneath;
Then, darting down, it let the waxen fraud alone
  And settled on the natural wreath.

The sequel's plain. But why this tale of yore?
I grant it's old; and yet, I claim it's new.
There's naught on earth that has not been before;
The false is always false, the true is true.
Our girls and flowers, in bevy and bouquet,
Are real or sham as when great Sol was king;
Ah, wise and happy is the youth today
Who knows the real and shuns the painted thing.

DEATH

Whene'er my boatman comes, no frown shall mar his face,
No war-like garment wrap his kingly form—
But peaceful robe. He calls for me; in his embrace
I'll fall asleep, and—sheltered from the storm—
My soul is wafted from the boistrous shore.
No pain; no grief. The heavy shadows o'er me steal;
The night grows dark; and yet, I question not the morn.
Once in my mother's womb I slept; now—as then—I feel
No fearful horror . . . trusting to be born
Into a brighter, higher life when this is gone.

LIFE'S DAY

Morning

One bright star, herald of the day,
Proclaims the coming of the sun,
The smaller lights, with lessening ray,
In brightening sky fade one by one.
Young life, how like the breaking of the morn!
Hope is the star that 'lumes thy opening sky;
When childish joys, the smaller lights, are gone,
Hope brightens into day, but does not die.

Noon

High in the zenith shines the sun
And floods the earth with heat and light;
Unseen, forgot, the stars shine on;
Earth-splendor dims their radiance bright:
'Tis thus in manhood's golden prime
The distant lights of heaven fade;
Success obscures the stars of that fair clime
When all the world's with light arrayed.

Night

Behind the hill the sun sinks down to rest,
Dark shadows fall o'er land and sea;
One bright star blooms out of the west
And gems bedeck night's canopy.
Thus comes old age. Earth-light burns low—
The sable mantle soon descends—
The stars of Hope and Faith in heaven glow;
Where life began, its brief day ends.

TRUTH

Falsehood has a thousand tongues,
Truth has only one;
But falsehood gone, truth moves on
Eternal as the sun.

LOVE LEADS TO LIGHT

Hate slams the door and locks the soul
A raging hell within;
Love brings the key that can set it free
To light and life again.

CALUMNY

Into the crowd the slanderer went,
Mean intent! Mean intent!
Out of the crowd the murderer came—
His weapon a tongue, his victim a name—
Oh, for shame! Oh, for shame!

Bedraggled in slime, down in the dust;
How unjust! How unjust!
Peace, fair name by calumny hid;
Can a falsehood be thy coffin lid?
God forbid! God forbid!

Through dark ravine the mountain rill
Flows on still! Flows on still!
Forth from concealment Truth will glide
To her ocean eternal, deep, and wide—
Golden tide! Golden tide!

A VOICE IN THE OPEN

I thought I had bliss by the ears
And could lasso the stars from the sky;
But I've missed in the throw, it appears—
It's trouble got roped, and I.

I've lost all I had in the world,
I've missed all the ends I sought;
In the coil for happiness twirled,
It's trouble and me that's caught.

I look from the ground to the trees,
All clad in radiant green;
Where sweet-scented leaves now wave to the breeze,
Last winter bare limbs were seen.

And I rise as one from the dead;
To the God of the oaks I cry,
"Oh, help me, like them, to lift up my head
Tho bare to a wintry sky!

A PRAYER

I saw a fragile craft afloat
At sea some twenty leagues or more,
The course and speeding of the boat
Directed by a man ashore.

Electric waves sent from the beach
The boat's adjusted relays fill;
Receiver and propeller reach,
To do the distant pilot's will.

Thus may I on life's great sea,
With heart attuned to things above,
Let faith and hope receive for me
God's wireless, tireless will and love.

THE SOURCE OF BEAUTY

The beauty of the landscape's not out there;
Within the soul it lies.
There would be no darkness anywhere
Were no dimness in the eyes.
The music of the spheres that roll—
The star is but the key;
The master touch comes from the soul
That wakes the melody.

LINES ON A SKULL

Behold this putrid mold'ring skull!
  Fit emblem of mortality! Senseless bone!
Yet, from these orbless caverns, dark and dull,
  Eyes bright as yours or mine have shone.
O mockery of life and mystery of death!
  About this grinning visage hung
The cheeks of youth and lips whose breath
  Was perfume to the soft winds flung.

Upon this time-depleted, crumbling pate
  Were sun-lit locks of golden hair;
This callus brow (Oh, irony of fate!)
  As beauty's own was once as fair.
This hideous, frail, and hollow shell
  Hath been the golden urn of thought and dream;
Within its narrow compass who can tell
  How much of heaven or hell did gleam?

Did fury passions of the mind,
  Or God in man here have control?
Did carnal pleasures dwarf and blind,
  Or reigned supreme the joys of soul?
Did skulking shame and pallid fear
  Lurk in the wake of cruel crime?
Did weeping sorrow hover here,
  Or faith arouse to deed sublime?

How strange that this low, earthly dome
  Should hold within a crypt the vaulted sky!
That imagery here found a home,
  And love an idol in a woman's eye!
How passing strange are life and death—
  Each mystery's of the other born;
Today we breathe the vital breath
  Another breathes when we are gone!

Alas, poor skull, thy fate is mine!
  As thou art now I, too, must be;
Yet, just as true, above thee shine
  The sun and stars that shine o'er me.
The God that rules the brightest day
  Keeps watch throughout the darkest night;
In life's young growth or death's decay
  I know whatever IS, is right.

The whole of truth none can discern—
  No link can solve the endless chain—
Yet, from this vacant skull I learn
  To feel a truth I can't explain.
A child who places to his ear
  An empty shell found on the shore
Voices of the waves may hear
  Suggesting depths he must explore.

A SONG OF THE SOUL

I'm a part of the boundless whole,
I'm a link in the endless chain,
I'm a throb of the Infinite Soul,
I'm a thought of the absolute brain.
A resultant of what has been,
I am bound to what must be;
God and the Devil—purity, sin—
Are cosmic forces in me.

I'm a note in the Song of Time
Thru the numberless ages sung;
I'm an echo to the fateful chime
By the Hand of Destiny wrung.
Sages who wrote, warriors who bled,
And pirates that ravaged the sea;
All that I've seen, thought of, or read
Make the entity folk call me.

I'm as old as the ancient dead,
I'm as young as the youngest born,
With Adam I gazed on the sun overhead,
And I saw the sun rise this morn.
With Judas, the Christ I betrayed;
With Peter, the Master denied;
With the thief on the cross I prayed
To the Man they crucified.

Of all the waves of light that roll
Thru clouds that blackest be,
I'm grateful most for this from the soul
Of the Man of Gallilee:
"The Father in me, and I in you,"
Now, doubt this truth who can:
A son of God, if Christ spake true,
Is love in a son of man.

If the sun gives life to the rose,
The rose will the world perfume;
If the sun the lily unclose,
It gives to the sun its bloom.
The sun is in the flowers,
The flowers are dreams of the sun;
With Christ in these hearts of ours,
Love's dream and our lives are one.

A beggar I met in a dusty street
Where throngs of humanity move;
My purse was flat, my soul replete
With the wonderful wealth of love.
The beggar fell as he passed me by,
But I lifted him with my hand;
He smiled his thanks, and love in his eye
Said, "Brother, I understand."

THE WIZARD OF THE GARDEN
(Luther Burbank)

He brought lost Eden's captive flowers
From blighting clime and sod
As Moses led poor Hebrew slaves
From under Egypt's rod;
And many a waif from arid plain
In pristine beauty blooms again.

For him the cactus gave its thorns,
Delicious fruit to bear;
The bramble bush discarded spurs
For berries ripe and rare;
The plum and prune lost hearts of stone
For golden sweets they had not known.

For him the lily fairer grew
In Santa Rosa's bowers;
The violet and mignonette
And all the sweetest flowers
Are poems fraught with Beauty's lore
That breathe of him forever more.

For him the plum tree's waving snow,
The peachtree's waxen bloom
And peartree's fluffy velvet robe,
The breath of spring perfume.
For all the beauty that he gave
Sweet nature smiles about his grave.

He did not know, but he believed
That God rules over head;
That life is for the living,
And death is for the dead.
Content with life's long happy day,
In the glad sunset he went away.

We do not know, but let us hope
The Amaranth of the skies
Now blooms for him who gave to us
An earthly paradise;
That for the garden left below
He sees the flowers of heaven grow.

'Twas from a garden in the night
The Master went alone,
But thru the darkness into light
God ever leads His own.
What tho that cry upon the tree,
"Why hast thou, God, forsaken me?"

HOW GREAT, HOW SMALL

His own soul is each man's universe;
What is, is what he knows and feels,
All else to him is nothingness.
Some souls contract about earth's paltry things
Like chiggoe skins 'round molecules of dust;
But some expand in ever widening waves
Of circling light through constellations bright
With God's eternal truths.

POEMS OF THE WORLD WAR

REMEMBER, LOVE

(The occasion that inspires it and the circumstances under which it is written sometimes contribute more to the appreciation of a song than does the song itself. This is true even of such masterpieces as "Lead Kindly Light," "Mary in Heaven," "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Home, Sweet Home," "Flanders' Field," and "Mighty Lak a Rose."

That the reader may more fully catch the spirit and meaning of the poem that follows, I briefly state, by way of prelude, how it came to be.

During the World War while superintendent of schools in a Georgia town I had in our high school graduating class a young lady whose sweetheart was in a soldiers' training camp.

Now, "in loco parentis" is the attitude of every true teacher in relation to the boys and girls entrusted to his care and guidance, and, when this beautiful girl came into my office one morning to tell me that John's company had been ordered to France, and at that very hour, he was out on the ocean, I tried to soothe her rebellious spirit with kindly words of sympathy, all in vain. "He will never come back," was the doleful refrain to all my words of encouragement.

Day after day she grew more and more disconsolate. The black cloud of war had cast its shadow over love's young dream. Now and then she would come to school with a calm radiance in her sad, intelligent face, but never again did her voice ring with school-girl gladness.

Months elapsed. Then came the charge of the doughboys at Chateau Thierry, the battle of dark Argonne—and John was among the thousands whose life blood is the price of liberty. And then I wrote "Remember, Love," with John and Jenny and ten thousand other embodiments of love and duty in my soul.—The Author).

Oh, would you have me linger here
To dally, Love, with you,
While Duty's voice is calling clear
Across the waters blue?
Remember, Love,
'Tis Duty's hand that brings to you
Honor's brightest bloom;
'Tis Duty's voice that sings to you
To banish fear and gloom.
'Tis Duty's heart that cares for you,
'Tis Duty's arm that bares for you
And do or die dares for you,
Remember, Love.

Oh, look not so reproachful, Love,
From tender eyes and true;
I hold not Duty's voice above
The call of heart, of home, of you
Remember, Love,
To me you'll ever be the same,
And nearest when I'm far;
For Duty's but your other name
Amid the smoke of war.
Thus Love and Duty cry to me,
And all mankind they tie to me,
Nor faith in God can die to me,
Remember, Love.

If you should ever call me, Love,
Across the distant blue;
If you should ever call, and I
Should fail to answer you,
Remember, Love,
I'm the star that glows for you
Beyond the realm of night;
I'm the sun that throws for you
The summer's glorious light.
I'm the flag I waved for you,
And with my life-blood laved for you—
I'm all things Duty saved for you,
Remember, Love.

LEST WE FORGET

The Now is but the eye, the hand, the head
  Unto the ever-lengthening Then;
The Past—a mighty giant—is not dead,
  But lives in every Where and When.

Mere phantoms of the things that were
  Are all the things that yet must be;
Today we dream *tomorrow* from
  The unforgotten *yesterday*.

Almighty God, how we forget
  Thy vengeance on the guilty Cain!
We dream the dream of envy yet,
  And brother is by brother slain.

Shall memory hold to greed and crime
  And all the wrongs that sin hath bred?
Nor light her torch with love sublime
  By heaven through the ages shed?

Oh, Star that shone on Judea's hill!
  Lead kindly, Light; we'll follow thee;
Through *hate's* dark cloud breaks on us still
  The dream of love that's yet to be.

FOR THE MILLIONS OF EARTH'S UNBORN

On a table at home, in old-fashion style,
Lies an old-fashion book today;
In it, Grandmother, with a grandmother's smile,
Has pressed baby's shoes away.
'Tis the Bible that Grandmother's mother once read
And oft lay on Great-grandfather's knee—
It will go—like the shoes—when Grandmother's dead,
To the baby that's yet to be;
The baby to come into life like a star;
That's to fill all the home with joy.
But Grandmother dreams of Grandbaby's Pa—
And she's knitting again for her boy.

Like an angel she sits, with the light on her hair;
In her face is a heavenly look,
As she dreams of other shoes, dainty and fair,
That she pressed in that very same book;
Of the cherub that came from the distant blue
And his little pink feet, zephyr bound;
Of the laughter-light and azure hue
In eyes with wonderment round.
It's many and many a year since then,
And today, while love's tears fall,
That little babe is one of the men
That sail at Humanity's call
Under the flag of the true and the brave—
From the robe of Heaven torn—
For Grandmother's shoes and Freedom to save
The millions of Earth's unborn.

KEEP FAITH WITH THEM

In Flanders Field the poppies glow—
With brighter hue than poppies know—
O'er soil enriched with crimson flood
Of many a martyr hero's blood.
In Flanders Field each poppy red
Is Freedom's torch flung by the dead.
"Keep faith with us," the poppies say
For voices hushed beneath their clay.
Keep faith with them? When we forget
May Old Glory's stars forever set;
Her milk-white bars to ice congeal;
Her blood-red stripes turn to steel;
Her every graceful flowing fold
Become a dungeon dark and cold,
And every miscreant soul repair
To die a coward ingrate there.
O God of Love! unite at length
The nations in a league whose strength
Shall hold a world in peaceful span
And crown at last the Son of Man.

THE EAGLE AT THE TOMB

There's magic in thy name!
Immortal is thy fame!
  Thy grave to freedom dear!
'Till Humanity has won
And vanquished is the Hun,
  Lafayette, I am here.

My wing in gratitude
And fond solicitude
  Has braved the distant blue;
My beak shall find a way
A debt of love to pay—
  My debt to France and you.

Thy soul is in my screams
And from my keen eyes gleams
  As from thy native sky,
Four million strong the brood—
Columbia's noblest blood
  Is here to save or die!

HANG A STOCKING FOR HIM

It is Christmas eve, and faces bright
Are gleaming with joy and hearthstone light.
Papa has come from his work to rest—
Has come to his home like a bird to his nest.
But here, be it said, no bird ever cooed
To tenderer mate or happier brood.
It may be a mansion, it may be a cot—
It matters not which, and it matters not what—
A home is a heaven and a heaven is home
Where love-lights are burning and papa has come
This night of all nights to gladden and cheer
With fruits of his labor the circle most dear.

Hang up baby's stocking, but think when you do
Of the boys that are fighting for God, home and you;
Of the sacrifice duty is making to love—
Of the men who place country all things above.
There are things in this life that money can't buy—
The values are fixed by the courts of the sky—
Hang a stocking for him without children or wife
Who, for you, and for yours, is giving his life;
Who kissed his young sweetheart, yea, kissed her good-bye,
For my home and yours to fight or to die.
Hang a stocking for him in tenderest mood,
And fill with the crystals of deep gratitude—
Yes, deep and as high as heaven's bright dome—
To the saviors of love, innocence, home.

"BELGAE SUNT FORTISSIMI"

Oh, Belgium, thou art a garden swept by storm!
Thy fields are seared in flames that lick the sky;
Thy Queen and angel kneels in woman's form
To bend with helpless hand and streaming eye
Above the ground whereon her starving subjects lie.
"Where thy country's heroes?" This to thy King
"In trenches dead and dying," his reply
That crowned the men uncrowned, with greater thing
Than coronets or titles grand to royal blood can bring.

Oh, grateful King! Far brighter on thy head
Is love entwined in mournful cypress leaf
Than all the laurels worn by tyrant, dead
To the soldier's sacrifice, the widow's grief,
The unhistoric names that hail him chief.
And Belgium, least at fault, severest torn,
Thou yet shall rise from all thy grief;
From darkest night shall come thy brightest morn,
And sweetest roses bloom from every piercing thorn.

The God of Peace thy suffering heart hath seen;
His hosts on earth have loved thee from afar,
His angels paint upon the sky thy hapless Queen
Enwreathed with lurid clouds; we call that picture
"War."
Oh, innocence, thou art the sacrifice for sin!
The dove must bleed to wash the vulture's scar.
At last, Thou Christ, who far too oft has been
Upon earth's cruel cross, shalt be her heart within.

THE CAMOUFLAGE

From Night—which is another name for Death—
In bright'ning Morn began the Sun to rise,
When grouchy East Wind, his polluted breath
Condensing into cloud, from mortal eyes
Concealed and then denied the source of peaceful skies.

Cold North Wind, too, with harsh and blustering blast,
In tones of War and Want and wailing Woe,
Did o'er the sky his black-winged legions cast
To screen with shadows Heaven's peaceful glow
And wrap in shroud of gloom the earth below.

Ah, Wrong and Error! Hinder how you will,
You cannot blot the light that comes from high!
Majestic, calm, serene, and glorious still,
The Sun shines on thru clouded sky—
You cannot blacken Truth by blinding mortal eye!

WOODROW WILSON

No tyrant, crowned! No scion of a royal tree;
No boaster of a proud and mighty name,
But from the world's great heart, like Neptune from the sea,
The product and the arbiter he came.
He spake for Earth—to Notus, Euros, Auster, all—
"Back to your homes in North and South and East and West!
Nor evermore let conflict and confusion fall
Where God designs life, work, and rest."

THE KNIGHTS OF ARGONNE

Oh, think you romance is a thing of the past,
And the days of true chivalry gone?
Love's phases may change, but love? It will last
As long as the heart of the human beats on.
The setting may vary, the carbon's the same;
And a diamond on Ptolemy's brow
From the smelting-pot came
Of the young world aflame
Along with the diamonds that flash for us now.

No knight of King Arthur, no hero of old
Was braver than men you saw yester-e'en;
Our soldier boys, counting love dearer than gold,
None braver than they ever have been!
At home or in France 'mid cannon's loud roar—
Wherever Old Glory is flung to the breeze—
You may seek evermore
The long ages o'er,
The knightliest knights will be found among these.

HUMANITY'S REPLY

Here's one—not one, but seven millions dead!
And who can count the maimed, the halt, the blind?
Their crime? For what were these to slaughter led?
Come, monarchs of the world, an answer find.
A crime's been wrought, but where? by whom? and when?
Oh, tell the mothers of the dead where lies the guilt and wrong;
Divine rights of kings or *human rights of men*—
At which of these doors does the charge belong?

What! silent all. Then hear humanity's reply;
"'Gainst Emperor's maddening dreams of world empire
And secret plots of kings, and future selfish wars, I
Led Columbia's hordes to save the world afire.
Five million sons she gave! Within my grateful breast
The living and the deathless dead are one.
The dead have done their part; to the living left the rest
To save or lose the goal, although the battle's won."

OPTIMISM

To die in the trench two comrades fell;
Said Pat to Mike, "This mud is hell."

"Be-gord, ye are right," said Mike to Pat,
"But look at the stars, and forget about that."

Two souls went out from temples of clay
By the torch of the star's inspiring ray.

God save all such! for when came the hitch
The world was saved by the man in the ditch.

MISCELLANEOUS

THE NEW DAY COLUMBUS

A youth obscure, but of capacious soul;
No heir to wealth or titles born;
No fame-illumed ancestral scroll
With favor crowned his natal morn.
For things like these he had no need;
With purpose high alone he stood.
American he, his sire a Swede;
Who knows but theirs the Viking's blood?

Not great because the fearless Norsemen were,
In youth he bent his eagle eye
From sagas of the sea to feel the stir
Of soul in conquest of the sky.
Within himself, all friendless and unseen,
Began his lofty dream and thought;
His brain into a cockle-shell machine
The *Spirit of St. Louis* wrought.

Let skeptics frown and sneering critics rail;
"The Flying Fool" the deafening roar—
Does David's faithful slingshot ever fail?
Or the snail shell ship that leaves Genoa?
Is *"Give me liberty or give me death!"*
In vain against oppression hurled?
Does perish with the morning's breath
"The first shot heard around the world?"

"Truth, high herself, is ofttimes lowly born,
In the rude stable in the manger nursed,
What humble hands unbar the gates of morn
Thru which the splendors of a new day burst!"
Shall one lone boy scarce known beyond his town
Count experts naught, their counsel less?
Dare Jove's far-reaching bolts and Neptune's frown
In pathless heights? He answered, "Yes."

Then like some bird with heavenly plumage fair
He sprang from earth to sky and takes his flight,
And with him goes a mother's prayer
That God will guide her precious boy aright.
God's eye is upon him when dull on his ear
Falls the shout of the crowd in the distance below;
God's arm is around him, there's nothing to fear
Tho the storm-cloud assail and fierce winds blow.

His ship, with grandeur filled and strong resolve,
Majestic rides above the boiling sea,
Uneering as worlds that round the sun revolve
Directed by the hand of Destiny;
Pursues its trackless path, and is at ease
In heights by mortals yet untrod,
Bathes in the thunder's home, in clouds that freeze;
In the tempest alone with night—and God.

As babes in the dark unto their mother cry,
And safe to her bosom tenderly pressed,
Truth, Purpose, and Faith, though black be the sky,
In the arms of the Infinite ever find rest.
Now Courage decks with snow the ship's light wing.

And, swooping downward, plays with "Ocean's mane;"
  While Hope's sweet songs in cheering sunshine ring
As the "Spirit of St. Louis" rises again.

Sun, moon, and stars our hero's brow enwreathe,
  And angels smile on him in heaven's expanse,
While beams on his vision, dim distant beneath,
  Britania's fair face and beckoning France.
How sweet the shouts from hearts that grateful burn!
  O, sweeter far than angel's kiss or starry crown
Is the deep love for service all nations return
  As the New Day Columbus to Paris swoops down.

THE BOY AT THE BAT

Are you aiming to be a sport, young man?
Do you think you can beat the world
If you steal every base in the game you can
And pitch a ball that's curled?
Do you count it smart to do a trick—
In seeming, not being, the true—
In fooling and doing a fellow quick,
Before that fellow does you?

Do you play the game of school, young man,
Just to hold your place in the class?
Do you set your peg, and make your plan
For credits only to pass?
Do you live to play and lie and cheat,
To get what you never have earned?
Is the goal of your life only to beat
The wisdom and knowledge you've spurned?

Then awake, young man, from your foolish dream
Thru all of the grades you may pass,
And get to the top in your baseball team
To live and die an ass.
A purpose and patience are better than pep,
If only that purpose be high;
With Lincoln or Stephens it's better to step
Than to run with Babe or Ty.

The peon, the serf, the African slave,
And the helot—fate-bound to the soil—
To lords of the earth, their masters, gave
Enforced, protested toil.
With brains bedwarfed, but muscles of steel,
In field and mind they wrought—
Ox-like, the lash and goad to feel—
Too crushed for dream and thought.

Humanity's back was by labor bent,
And sweat drops fell from the brow;
The wealth from earth by the toiler rent
Is humanity's heritage now.
Not the man with the hoe, nor the boy with the bat,
But the gridiron route to fame,
With gambling promoters, big-bellied and fat,
Would bedraggle our schools in shame.

A TASTY PIE

Thoughts, pure and clean; smiles, bright and dear;
Mix them half and half.
In a quart of good cheer, warm and clear,
Stir them to a laugh.

The *flower* of love sift into this—
A bushel and a peck;
Spice with the bliss of baby's kiss
And hug around the neck.

Add sweet, fresh milk, a gallon or so—
The "HUMAN KINDNESS" brand.
It's hard, I know, to *need* this dough,
But it makes the best pie in the land.

HOPE AND MEMORY

Anticipation forward points the view
And guilds with happiness;
Live right, and retrospection, too,
Shall charm thee none the less.

NIGHTFALL

Sad winds blow,
Soft hues glow,
The sky bends low
'Way out on the Western sea.
O setting sun!
O day that's done!
You'll never come back—
Never come back to me.

Shining far,
'Cross the bar,
The evening star
Illumes the brow of night.
Soon myriad gems,
In diadems,
Come a-crowning the dark—
Crowning the dark with light!

Life's brief day
Fades away,
And soft lights play
Where shadows of death bend low.
Hope is that star
Across the bar,
And soon shall the gems—
The lights of eternity—glow.

NOVEMBER

November lured me out today—
  And, Oh, what wonder met my eyes!
In field and fen a-hidden lay
  My youth's lost paradise.

'Mong withered leaves my feet sank deep,
  And all around was ashen hue
Of goldenrods in death asleep
  With violets the springtime knew.

No marigolds gleamed in the grass—
  The grass itself was cold and dead;
An icy lake that shone like glass
  Reflected cloudlets overhead.

In strange contrast with leafy mold,
  Came visions of the springtime light;
I saw lost youth a page unfold—
  Like morn in shadow of the night.

Thru clouds a golden sunlight shone
  And touched my brow with fond caress;
And I alone, seemed not alone—
  In gray November's loneliness.

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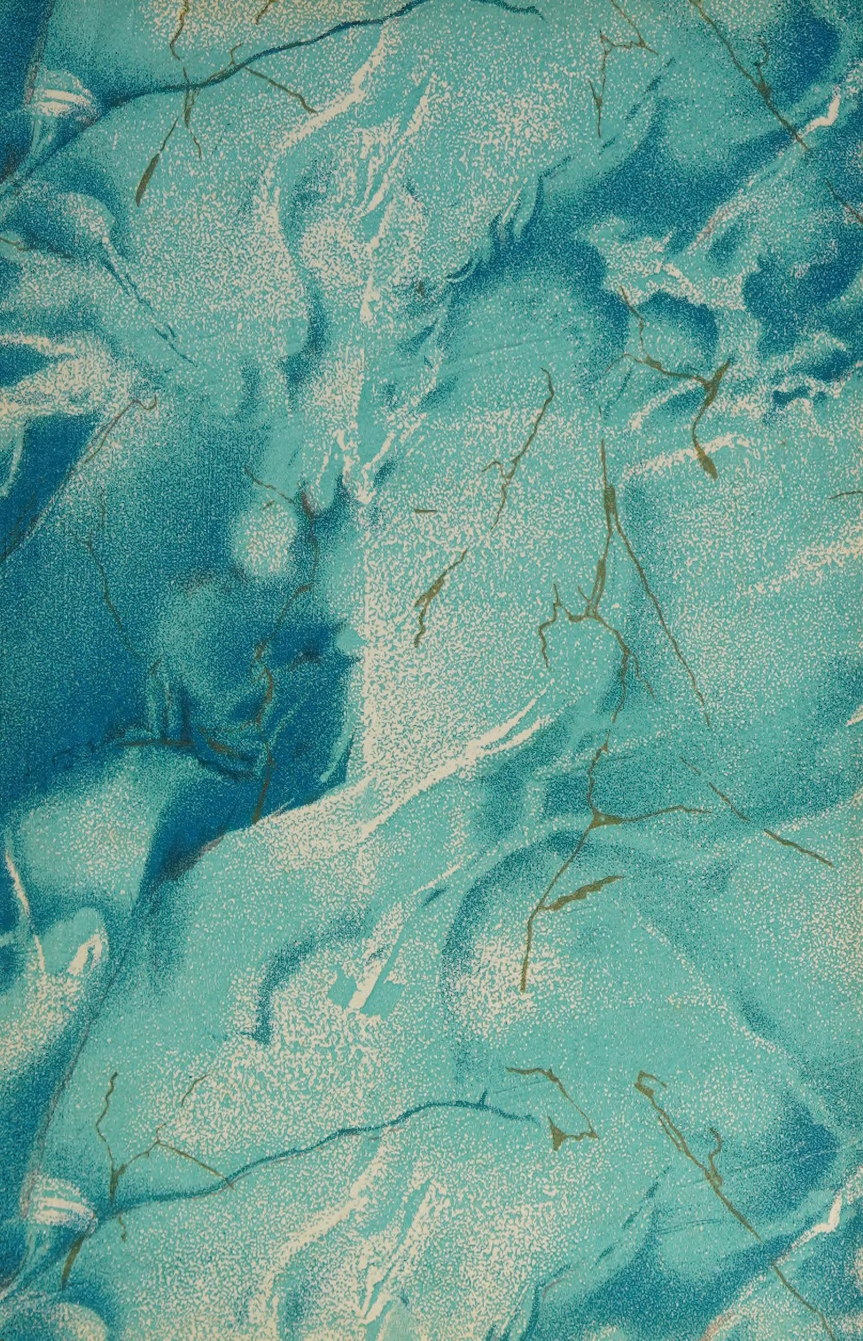
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